EXCLUSIVE! Complete NEW MICHAEL SHAYNE Mystery Novel

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

25c

FEBRUARY



Who wrote what in this month's Bluebook

Purely Personal

Virtually everyone who's ever read a mystery novel, or who has enough intelligence to find his way to the corner movie, has heard of **Brett Halliday** and his fictional detective, Mike Shayne. Which is why we're shooting off small rockets over having landed Brett's newest (his 25th) Mike Shayne thriller, "The Naked Frame," which you will find if you have the strength to turn to page 94.

Brett, who was born Davis Dresser, is one of the few mystery-story writers we know who is married to a mystery-story writer, a pretty fair yarn-spinner named Helen McCloy. Between them, they have turned out some of the country's best detective fiction, as well as a product known as McCloy Dresser, age 5, who'll probably grow up to write mysteries herself.

Although they have traveled darned near everywhere, the Dressers now live in Westport, Conn., in a house decorated primarily with books, one of which we hope is a first draft of the forthcoming 26th Mike Shayne story.

* * *

"Bone of Contention" (pages 54-55) is a happy little piece which author **Joe Coogan** claims is gospel truth and which resulted from a conversation Coogan was having in something known as a bar with a man known as playwright Moss Hart. It seems Joe was in the Army, and Hart, who was around with a USO show, had seen some stuff the young GI had written, and— Well, that's how writers are born.

"I started to write seriously when I got out of the Army," Joe reports, "and sold the first story I wrote to *Collier's*. That was bad; it gave me a false sense of confidence which took a long time to overcome, and during which I reached the low point of writing a one-minute radio commercial for which I was paid with a free haircut. It was a terrible haircut (and the commercial wasn't so good, either)."

Since then, Joe has graduated to paying for his own haircuts, has begun to see a bit more success with his crops, wrote a prize-winning play, got married, and has a son, Kevin, who still looks ahead to his first birthday.

If you've been a *Bluebook* reader for anything more than twelve months, you need no introduction to **Wilbur S. Peacock** or his character, *Snake River Jim*, who is back with us in "The Swindle" (pages 16-23). For the newcomers, however, Scotty reports that *Snake River Jim* is far from being fiction.

"I've known several Snake River Jims," he says. "As a boy in Kansas, I met them every year in the flickering lamplight of their medicine shows, and I can remember the Elixirs and the tooth powder and the foot soap and the hair pomade. In those days of live entertainment, Snake River Jims were fun, and, if a boy spoke politely, he might even be permitted to wash the bottles."

Now 37, Peacock is, by his own admission, "six foot and skinny," and possesses a wife, a son, a daughter, an ulcer and a dislike for work, all acquired during ten years of residence in New York. He has sold some 400 stories to magazines, has written for radio and TV, and claims he writes "anything and everything." And, by the way, he also admits to being a fisherman, a lying good fisherman.

* * *

The writer of "Two" (pages 6-12), **Evan Hunter**, claims to being 26, married to a city-editor type who edits his copy, and father to three noisemakers, two of whom are twins. His gripping story of two survivors of a ship-sinking results, he says, from a tour of duty in the Navy during that other war, and his characters are composites of many officers he's known. Any old pals who try to read themselves into "Two" however, can stop right now; Hunter made it all up. Good, too, we think.

* * *

Van MacNair, Jr., who wrote the dandy tale about a top jockey, "Fancy Frankie," which is on pages 76-83, says he got the idea some years ago when he took a girl to Maryland's Havre de Grace racetrack, and the girl suggested he bet on a 100-to-1 shot in the 8th race. MacNair knew better, and played the favorite. When the girl's selection came in, MacNair realized a moment of wisdom—he married the lady.

Now free-lancing out of an historic old house on the James River, in Virginia, Van has two sons in addition to the wife with horse-sense, looks back on a varied newspaper career, and looks ahead to the day the Giants win another pennant. Man apparently knows less about baseball than he does about horses.

* * *

Jonathan Waldron, creator of "How To Catch a Sturgeon" (pages 13-15), claims that's just his working name. "My hunting and fishing name is Slim," he writes.

"The truth is," Slim reports, "that I am built along the lines of a northern pike (without the dorsal fin)."

A native of the Wisconsin lake country, Waldron says he owns a good Springer Spaniel named Sheba, a Model 12 Winchester 16-gauge, a 35 Remington automatic, a couple of fly rods, a duck skiff, some decoys, and a sturgeon shanty just like the one he describes in his very amusing yarn.

In between caressing the above, in the order named, Slim picks up eating-money editing a house organ for a welding company and writing funny pieces for the papers. See pages 13 to 15.

* * *

While interviewing **Fred Roner** for the story "Freddie the Dip" (pages 71-75), **Lester David** says he obtained complete and overwhelming proof that Roner is the professional he says he is. Even though Les knew Roner makes his living demonstrating the pocket-picking art (on a highly legal basis, of course!), Roner still managed to lift the reporter's wallet, watch, notebook and sense of self-assurance.

"The man's incredible!" Les told us after the interview. "What he'd have taken from me if I hadn't been watching, I dread to think. Probably the shirt right off my back."

One thing he can't take—Lester's new daughter, born the same day as the author's fine story on Freddie.

COMING UP

As practically everybody knows by now, Groucho Marx is not the only funny fellow in his immediate family. The guy also has a couple of brothers. Very amusing brothers. And he's also got a son, name of Arthur.

Now Art here is a pretty humorous boy, as anyone who read a book the lad whipped off several years ago can tell you. Maybe you even read it yourself. Called "The Ordeal of Willie Brown." That was the book which made us decide that some day we were going to sell our old typewriter to get enough money to buy an Arthur Marx yarn.

Well, we finally found a sucker for that typewriter. Which means that next month's *Bluebook* will feature an Arthur Marx piece. And mighty funny, too. All about swordfish, and how to look like Ernest Hemingway.

Sounds worth a quarter, doesn't it?

* * *

Also in the works for next month is another amazing story by General Victor Gordon, the Central American soldier of fortune who wrote "Revolutions Are My Business" for our issue of last August. Now, the general has written one of the most astounding stories ever to appear in any magazine. Called "There Is a Shangri-La," the piece describes an undeveloped area down on the Yucatan peninsula, a region known to be rich in gold, oil and similar precious commodities, and which the general claims is the most fertile country in the world! If this is the case, it's something we feel you *Bluebook* readers ought to know, and we're paying the man chunks of dough to tell you about it.

It'll be in the March issue. With maps, yet.

* * *

You been worrying lately because you haven't been getting enough exercise? If so, relax. According to the newest theories, you can live forever these days by doing nothing more strenuous than batting your eyes three times daily, after meals. If you want to know how it's done, read the March issue. We'll tell you.

* * *

You say you prefer fiction to articles? All right. The March issue's loaded with excellent fiction. In addition to some eight choice short stories, there'll be another John Rhodes Sturdy adventure novelette, two—count 'em—*two* book-length novels (we thought you'd like a bonus), and all the cartoons, anecdotes and fillers any man could want.

Stay alive till March, huh?

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

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PHILLIPS WYMAN, *Publisher*

• MAXWELL HAMILTON •
Editor

LEN ROMAGNA, *Art Editor*

SUMNER PLUNKETT, *Assistant Editor*

SHORT STORIES

NOVELETTE

ARTICLES

BLUEBOOK'S COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

SPECIAL FEATURES

The short stories and novels herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

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PRO and CON



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Noisemaker

To the Editor:

In the November issue, I read the first three paragraphs of "The Big Noise," by Dugal O'Liam.

Please tell me how much Mr. O'Liam earns in one year, and who he is, anyway? Never heard of him before, but, like me, millions of Americans know Mel Allen.

W. C. Kearns.

Levittown, N. Y.

To the Editor:

I've been reading *Bluebook* for about forty years, but this is the first time I've had enough ambition to write and tell you how much I appreciate it. However, the article in the November issue, "The Big Noise," by Dugal O'Liam, is so good, and touches on a subject I'm sure is the number one pain in the neck to most of your readers—and at least 90 percent of TV viewers all over the country—that I just had to let you know that I swear I must have written it myself, and I'll bet most of your readers will feel the same way.

There migbt be some doubt in some quarters about Dugal's *nom de plume,* but if he continues to turn out material like "The Big Noise," he can call himself Rita Hayworth and it will be all right by me. I sure hope someone makes sure that Twinkle Tongue Allen and the rest of the sports announcers get to see that article; it might make them realize how a good majority of TV fans feel about them.

Hugh E. Moore.

Baltimore, Md.

No Rita Hayworth—and no Mel Allen either—Dugal O'Liam is a veteran writer and newspaperman. BB *thanks reader Moore and asks reader Kearns if he judges all critics and dissenters by the size of their pay checks. —Ed.*



"Am I cheering you up, dear? The doctor said it's very important for me to be gay."

Room Service

To the Editor:

I greatly enjoyed your story, "China Coaster," in the November issue.

But there is one thing I don't understand. On page 100, column 1, paragraph 2, it says, "I grabbed the gun and my wallet and ran for tbe back stairs."

Then later, he tells *Fong* that he left his gun in his room. How is that possible if he took the gun with him?

Richard Ipsen.

Napa, Calif.

He's talking about two different rooms, Dick—the hotel room and the one Fong *lent him. Read it again, and it'll be clearer. —Ed.*

Traveling Salesman

To the Editor:

Last spring my uncle sent me a copy of *Bluebook* which I recognized instantly. It was one I'd bought, read and sent to my son in Korea nearly two years before. Since then I've traced the magazine. From Korea it went to Europe, to another son, then back to Japan to a cousin. It has passed through seven hands coming back to me, and has traveled approximately 27,000 miles!

Does anyone have a more traveled *Bluebook?*

Rex Campbell.

Mullen, Neb.

Sour Grapes

To the Editor:

Have just finished reading your November issue. Never wrote a comment to a magazine editor before, but this one impels me to bid you and a formerly swell magazine good-by. Have read *Bluebook* since early in Clarence Herbert New's series of "Free Lances in Diplomacy" (maybe even before) and never has such a poor choiee of stories been offered as now.

Your former editor really had what it took to suit my taste. Maybe the public wants things like "China Coaster," where there's a new sex incident every few pages. But not me. The former atmosphere of cleanliness has fallen away, leaving drinking, sex and muck unfit for any reader, young or old.

Good-by.

H. Flaherty.

Bradford, Pa.

To the Editor:

I've watched with some anxiety the changes which have been taking place in *Bluebook* of late. I feel a sort of proprietary interest in the magazine, for I've been reading it for about 24

years now, but I've been biding my time, waiting for things to jell before deciding one way or another on the changes.

Your editorial comment on the economic necessity for change did not go unheeded; there's probably a good deal in what you say. But if you're going to start printing material like "Once a Sucker" (August issue), I think your ideas need some revision. *Bluebook* has always been free from smut; I've never seen (or, at least, don't remember) a story of its nature in your pages.

You've managed for years to get top-flight manuscripts. Why then bother with the Mickey Spillane type of story?

Lt. Eugene L. Meade.
Ft. Eustis, Va.

Dissenter

To the Editor:

I don't suppose one letter, more or less, will make a difference to you folks, but I'd like to drop this line anyway. I read "Pro and Con" every month I can get a copy of *Bluebook*, and enjoy it very much; and I'd like to put in my two-bits' worth, if you don't mind.

I've watched the covers change and the style of stories vary in the three years I've been reading the magazine, and I don't feel the changes are bad. In fact, it seems to me the book gets better and better every month.

Thanks for such a good magazine, and don't let the people who are complaining about the changes bother you. I think the majority will agree the magazine is getting better and better all the time.

A/1c Billy D. Edson.
c/o Postmaster,
San Francisco, Calif.

Like We Say . . .

To the Editor:

To my way of thinking, the answers given in reply to the letters in "Pro and Con" are very fair and honest (and most enjoyable to read, besides). I don't know anything about editors *(you lucky man! —Ed.)*, but *Bluebook's* editors certainly seem to have to take a lot of buffeting from John Q. Public. So I take my hat off to you.

Which, having said, may I be the one to answer the letter from Gay Morrison (November issue) regarding the Lindbergh case.

Sorry, Gay Morrison, but I for one did not know as much about the Lindbergh case as you seem to. *Bluebook* thus has given me a better insight on this case than I'd ever had before, and I'm now ready to read anything else *Bluebook* may print in the future on the subject.

You begin your letter by saying "If I were profane . . ." Did you know that, even to *think* of using profanity, is the same as if you'd spoken the words? Emmet Fox, in his book "The Sermon on the Mount," says:

"With a new difficulty of any kind, it is the reception you give it mentally, and the attitude you adopt toward it in your own thoughts, that completely determines its effect upon you.

". . . What matters to you, truly, is not people or things or conditions in themselves, but the thoughts and beliefs you hold concerning them. It is not the conduct of others, but your own thoughts that make or mar you."

Frederick J. Watson.
Rochester, N. Y.

That ought to hold just about everybody, Fred. Thanks. —Ed.

Pen Pals

To the Editor:

Maybe I'm speaking out of turn, but after reading "Pro and Con" for October, I was downright disgusted with the way some of *Bluebook's* readers find so much fault with the stories you publish. Speaking for myself, I really enjoy *Bluebook* much better than I do women's magazines.

I imagine if other readers would sit down and write how much they enjoyed your magazine, you would begin to feel that you'd accomplished something.

Especially from the Holmes family, in Prescott, we say thank you very much for down-to-earth, good entertainment.

Mrs. Joyce Holmes.
Prescott, Ariz.

Big People

To the Editor:

I'm not much to laugh, or even smile, very often, but I think "The Coming of the Little People" (November issue) should be distributed, not only to everyone in this country, but to everyone in the world. And it should be remembered not only for years but for the rest of our lives.

It proves again what we hope all people, of all nations, will some day realize—that laughter is truly the universal language. I'm one reader who will never forget this excellent story.

Don A. Bowes.
Lansing, Mich.

To the Editor:

Particularly when you're in the hospital, and need something to cheer you up, "The Coming of the Little People" was more than welcome. It was exciting, and just the kind of fictional medicine a man needs.

George Edwards.
Dundalk, Md.



"Looks like a good day to take down the screens!"



Thinking Out Loud

If those readers who have been writing us demands for another "Snake River Jim" story (from which correspondence your editors have learned a new assortment of interesting four-letter words) will kindly turn to pages 16-23 of this issue, we think they'll find their campaign has not been without results. Snake River Jim is with us again.

We realize, of course—also as a result of the above correspondence—that there are some additional readers who feel their lives will be complete if they *never* see another Snake River Jim yarn, and we'd suggest these latter soothe themselves with some of the many other fine morsels in this month's menu. Nobody's pointing any guns at anybody in an attempt to force them to read any one particular story in *Bluebook;* it is our perhaps novel thought that tbere's enough in this handsome publication to appeal to the most catholic taste.

So if you've been slavering for more of Snake River Jim, here he is. If you can take him or leave him alone, get a grip on yourself, thumb through the rest of the book, and see if there isn't at least one arrangement of nouns and verbs that was put there just for you. It's a free country.

* * *

Another blizzard of correspondence whicb has added considerably to our education arrived as the result of an article in our issue of last September, an offering labeled "The Pentagon's War on Pistols," by Ashley Halsey, Jr. This monograph produced illuminating reading from customers who ranged from two-star generals to kids with freckles who were en route to their Draft Boards and who wondered if they'd be smart to stop off along the way and buy themselves a .45.

Specifically, Mr. Halsey remarked that the Army brass was in opposition to its foot soldiers carrying pistols, a stand which Mr. Halsey felt to be somewhat unfair, and perhaps a contributory factor in the demise of an occasional GI in Korea and elsewhere.

As a result of Mr. Halsey's thus expressing himself so pointedly, various citizens, of high and low stature, drew a bead on this department and entertained us with sprightly comment on our origins, parentage, personal habits and demeanor. We were, they said, being unfair to the military, and maybe even a slight touch unpatriotic. Apologize, they stormed, or die like a dog.

At about which time, another pamphlet, which we shall call *Look* Magazine, took the argument right out of our hands by going a shade farther than Mr. Halsey and insinuating that, aside from the business about pistols, the Army's progress on weapons still left it back somewhere around the time of the Civil War.

"With few exceptions," *Look* said, "all the young GI's weapons were designed before he was born. He fires a 1906 cartridge from a rifle first built in 1928. He hurls the same type of hand grenade his forebears used in World War I. His machine-guns were all developed between 1917-'19, with a mechanism patented by John Browning in the days of Queen Victoria and President McKinley."

So that makes two magazines and a score of editors traitors to their country for picking on the Army. But, though we haven't checked with *Look* to get their feelings, our own musings are far from being unpatriotic. Rather do we feel that this just may possibly be the greatest country God evet created. We'd like to see it represented by a fighting machine which is equal to that impression.

* * *

Since we seem to be on the subject of letters to the editor, this might be as good a time as any to thank the increasing number of kind souls who have been moved to write us notes of sympathy for the abuse they feel we get as the result of a large segment of the population's having learned to use the alphabet. It's too bad, these nice people tell us, that so many folks feel constrained to beat us around the head and shoulders.

To which we bow our heads in appreciation, but add that abuse is part of an editor's job, and is the reason he is paid so much by bis employers that be occasionally finds difficulty closing bis wallet. We can't say that an occasional masb note doesn't leave us depressed—particularly if it arrives at the end of a day featured by an argument with the girl back home, a report tbat one's heir bas just hit Teacher in the head with a rock, a session with the boss about a missed deadline, and an argument with the elevator-man over who will win the National League pennant.

...AND YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT 'EM

"The Finance Company sent me, this time!"

By and large, though, an editor has no rigbt to complain if the cash clients take exception to his conduct; this is the cash clients' inalienahle right for having forked over their twenty-five-cent pieces in tbe first place. But . . . When they don't write at all, either in anger *or* devotion—neighhor, that's when we'll need your sympathy.

* * *

We do think, however, that an occasional blistering communiqué from the readers is worthy of note, and, since literally all such are written by a lady whom we shall call Miss Erminia Lambert, let's pause here and make the note.

Erminia's attitude toward *Bluebook* is best described as caustic. Briefly, she hates things: Things like college boys who get good jobs, editors who hathe regularly and thus get exaggerated ideas of their superiority, citizens who vote Repuhlican, professional athletes, generals who get elected President, dry Martinis, sex, magazines for men, and people younger and smarter than she, of whom we suspect there must be millions.

At the moment, Lambie-pie is insisting tbat all references to the fact that there are two sexes he eliminated from *Bluebook* immediately. She is against—and pretty violently—all illustrations showing pretty girls. She also opposes the idea that anyone, particularly a character in a story, ever knits the raveled sleeve by the application, internally, of strong drink. "Just because you're young and went to college," Ermie scolds, "do you have to palm this stuff off on your elders?"

To which, of course, we have no answer. Although we personally never drink anything stronger than celery tonic, blush when we walk past a clothesline with ladies' garments hanging thereon, and are convinced that the future of America rests on aged characters wbo flunked out of grade school, still the majority of our readers seem to feel otherwise; and naturally we bow to the will of the majority.

We do say this, however: from the very heginning—as all writers and their agents have been told—we have insisted that sex, for the pure sake of sensationalism, not he included in *Bluebook* manuscripts. At the same time, we've instructed our contrihutors in our belief that sex is a reality, and has, on occasion, played a rôle in events that have made history. In other words, treated wisely and with taste, sex has a place in literature. And the same goes for whisky.

As for youth and education—well, we can close all the schools and turn them into fish hatcheries (hut that would he sex again, wouldn't it?). As to what we can do to stop people from being young, we really don't know.

Let 'em read all our letters from Erminia, maybe.

MAXWELL HAMILTON



SPECIALISTS . . . In Owosso, Michigan, at a dinner given by Shiawassee County's Conservation Association, church members took extra precautions to keep the beer hidden while the women were present; stacked it in an oven and forgot to tell the cooks, who lit the stove and heated the beer, which exploded, blowing off the oven door and flooding the floor with a thick layer of creamy foam.

SUPPLY . . . In Malaga, Spain, with two bullfighters gored and a third out of action with a self-inflicted sword-wound, received when he tried to kill a bull and missed, authorities called a halt to bullfighting because they were running out of matadors.

. . . AND DEMAND . . . In St. Louis, a filling-station recently got more business from robbers than from customers, with three robberies in eight days, which resulted in the loss of $500 and a leg wound for one of the attendants.

VIGILANTES . . . Claremore, Okla., after a still was discovered in a sewer, the county sheriff and his men crawled in to wait for the moonshiners. After waiting all night, they learned that local police, not tipped off by the sheriff but notified of prowlers by well-meaning citizens, had stood watch all night at the sewer entrance. Net result of the two opposing all-night vigils: one of the sheriff's men was bitten by a 'possum which lived in the sewer.

INDIGESTIBLE COMESTIBLE . . . In Hamburg, Germany, a valuable prize East Frisian bull, seriously ill, recovered after an operation removed a Nazi party button from its stomach.

SKOL . . . In Sheffield, England, the Sheffield University's beer-drinking marathon was scheduled, with lemonade instead of beer.

GENEROSITY . . . In Youngstown, Ohio, after a candidate for municipal court judge passed out cards all evening at a political rally, he discovered he had accidentally distributed those of his opponent.

PERSISTENCE . . . In Houston, police chuckled at the burglar who broke into the Hi-Lo Oil Co. but failed to open up the cash register, the cigarette machine or the soft-drink machine; tried to drive away with a trailer truck, which jackknifed; placed two long-distance phone calls and found no one at home; finally left, disgusted.

HONEST TO GOODNESS . . . In Williamsburg, Mass., during the Presidential campaign, police looked high and low for the person who stole a banner which had been stretched across the town's main street proclaiming: "We Need Honesty."

NOTHING TO LAUGH ABOUT . . . In Vienna, Austria, shortly after the telephone system announced it would provide subscribers with a number they could dial to get a daily chuckle (similar to the weather reports in New York City), it was announced that a shortage of jokes made the service impractical.





We were alone, just two of us to fight the sea and the sharks, and only one of us could come out of it alive.

By EVAN HUNTER

HIS NAME WAS ANDREWS. He sat opposite me in the open boat, his big hands clasped together, his body angled forward as he rested his arms on his knees. The front of his shirt was open in a wide V from his neck to his waist, with a carpet of red hair covering his huge barrel chest. Two red eyebrows crouched over his gray eyes like shaggy caterpillars. The red hair on his head was a fiery crown above the angled planes of his face.

Before he'd come aboard in Agadir, he had spent months in the African sun and his skin was burned dark. He was the new First Mate, and had sat at the skipper's table for his meals, so that he and I had remained strangers during the two days the *Masterway* had stayed afloat.

He kept his hands clasped together, and I thought for a minute he was praying. I didn't say anything. I kept looking out over the water at the white-capped waves that rolled toward the boat. I was thinking of the *Masterway* and the terrifying crunch of metal when she'd collided with the all but invisible hulk of a half-sunken ship—a hulk we had thought was twenty miles south of our course. I was remembering the scramble for the lifeboats, the frightened faces, the men leaping into the sea. I was remembering all that and being silently grateful for the miracle of the boat under me.

"Let's get started," he said suddenly. His voice surprised me—it was low and hoarse, and it bore the unmistakable ring of authority.

"I guess we'd better," I said. I stared at him for a moment. His clothes already had begun to dry from the strong sun, but in spots they were still drenched with water. He was a good swimmer, this First Mate. I know because I had reached the boat and was sitting in the sternsheets when I saw his red head bob to the surface. He'd looked around and spotted the dinghy. Then his powerful arms had sliced through the water in a fast crawl. I had tried to help him

aboard when he came alongside, but he had shrugged my hands away and climbed over the side, his breath heaving into his chest.

He hadn't said a word until a minute ago when he told me to get started. I was a little slow in reaching for the oars, and his red brows pulled together into a frown.

"What's the matter, Mister?"

"I—"

"Speak up."

I looked at him curiously for a moment, wondering what had caused his voice to take on such sudden harshness. "I was wondering about the others," I said. "Do you think—"

He grinned a mirthless grin and said, "I think we have the distinction of being the only survivors."

"I thought perhaps—"

"You're the Third Mate, aren't you?" he snapped.

"Yes," I said.

"Third Mates aren't paid to think."

"What?" I was shocked more than anything else.

"You heard me, Mister."

I didn't answer. I picked up the oars and slipped them into the oarlocks. I hesitated then, looking at the First Mate again.

"What is it now, Mister?"

"I was wondering which way we should go."

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Simpson."

"Your full name."

"Robert J. Simpson."

"What's the 'J' for?"

"John."

He nodded briefly, and his gray eyes were noncommittal. "You may call me Mr. Andrews," he said. He stroked his heavy jaw and added, "We might as well get things straight from the start, Simpson. I'm still First Mate, and you're still a subordinate Third. As far as I'm concerned, there'll be no relaxation of discipline here. I'll give the orders, and you'll carry them out. Is that clear?"

For a minute, I thought he was kidding. I mean, what the hell! Firsts and Thirds just didn't behave that way—and especially not in an open boat on the high seas. And then I saw the hard shell of his eyes, and I knew he wasn't kidding.

"Is that clear?" he repeated.

"Clear enough," I said.

I guess the malice in my voice showed a little. His eyes widened ever so slightly, and then his brows pulled down. "Clear enough, *sir*," he corrected. "And I'm not sure I like the tone of your voice, Simpson."

"I'm sorry, sir," I said.

He seemed satisfied. He unlocked his fingers and pointed off the starboard bow of the dinghy. "We'll head that way, Simpson."

"Is there land that way?" I asked.

His face went blank again, his hair a flaming red above the burnished bronze of his skin. His mouth tightened into a razorlike slit, and the skin pulled tighter over his high cheekbones.

"I'm afraid I didn't make myself clear, Simpson," he said. "I mentioned discipline before, and I meant it. I don't know what kind of ship the *Masterway* was before I came aboard, and I guess I'll never know now. But I know what kind of ship *I* run, and that's the way things will be here." He paused. "You'll address me as 'sir' whenever you speak to me, and you won't question the motives behind my commands."

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Is it perfectly clear this time?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't suppose you'd like to have your Mate's papers revoked for insubordination, would you?"

"No, sir."

"Then get this boat moving."

The sea is a big place, they say. People have described it in glowing terms. They've told of the endlessness of it, of the wide expanse of blue-green that stretches away from the eye. They've described the way the sky drops into the sea, blends with it at the horizon line.

They're wrong; the sea is really small. It's just a circle, and you're the center of that circle. The circle never changes size because there's nothing to break the monotony of it. It's the same circle and the same sea, and you're a tiny dot right in the center. If you're moving you don't realize it because the sea is moving, too; a churning, white-sprayed wall of water that shifts and rolls beneath the hull of the boat. It's always the same: distant, aloof, expressionless, boring.

The First Mate was just like the sea. He sat in the sternsheets, his eyes boring past my shoulder, seemingly fixed on an invisible mark far off on the horizon. He didn't say a word, except to give occasional instructions about the rowing.

At the end of two hours of steady rowing, I pulled in the oars and dropped them into my lap.

"What's the matter, Simpson?" he asked.

"I'm tired, sir."

"Take five, then," he said.

"Thanks." I opened one of the waterproof lockers and rummaged around with one hand. I felt a package of cigarettes and pulled them out. I was tearing off the cellophane wrapper when Andrews said, "I don't remember saying the smoking lamp was lighted."

• Illustrated by RAY HOULIHAN

I held the cigarettes in my left hand, and my right hand paused in the act of reaching for matches. "Huh?" I said.

"You heard me," he snapped. "I didn't say the smoking lamp was lighted, and it's not. Not until I say so."

"The smoking lamp?" I squinted at him through the hot sun. He'd used an expression I hadn't heard since—what the heck, I couldn't remember *when* I'd heard it last! The only time anyone aboard the *Masterway* hadn't been allowed to smoke was when we were fueling.

"You know what the smoking lamp is, don't you, Simpson?"

It was hard to keep my temper. "I believe I do remember now, sir. It's a little hazy in my memory—"

"Well, it had better become clear mighty fast," Andrews said. "The smoking lamp is out, and there'll be no smoking until I say so."

"Do you smoke, sir?" I asked.

"I'll ask the questions, Simpson."

"Yes, sir," I said. *Yes, sir!* I thought to myself. *But wait until we get ashore, sir! Just wait until we get ashore.*

I put cigarettes and matches into my shirt pocket. Andrews sat staring at me, and when I finished, he said, "We'd better get started again."

I didn't answer. I picked up the oars and started rowing, the sun hot on my back. I kept looking over his shoulder, looking at the endless semicircle I could see from where I sat. The sun had passed overhead and was dropping toward the sea like a molten ball of lead. I kept rowing, keeping my eyes on the water, avoiding Andrews' face. I tried to forget all about the *Masterway*, and the collision, and the open boat, and the land we might never reach.

Andrews called a halt at about six-thirty by my wristwatch.

"Five bells," he announced, as though he were calling everyone to chow back on the *Masterway*. "We'd better have a bite."

He took out a sheath knife, rummaged around in the bottom of the boat, and found a carefully wrapped salami and a waterproof tin of American cheese. He unwrapped the salami, dropping the plastic covering at his feet, then began to slice it with the heavy knife. I sat in the bow, watching him place the thin slices of salami on the wooden thwart amidships. When he'd put down six slices, he stopped and pried the lid off the cheese tin. He cut two square hunks of cheese and put these down alongside the salami slices. Then he reached down for a tin of soda crackers, slit the band around the lid and the container, and pried it open with

the point of his knife. He took out four crackers, placed them on the thwart.

"We'll share the food evenly," he said.

I realized he felt this was a big gesture. I took a slice of salami and a cracker and started to chew. I was hungry, but the salami and the cracker were both dry, and I had a hard time swallowing them. Andrews came up with a canteen and handed it to me.

"Here," he said.

I took a small swig of water and passed the canteen back to him. He tilted it to his lips and kept it there for a long while. I listened to the gurgling sound of the water as it spilled down his throat. He took it away from his lips at last and wiped the back of his big hand across his mouth.

"Aggghl" he said in contentment.

I licked my lips and reached for the canteen again.

"I think we've had enough," Andrews said, halting me and screwing the lid on. "This is going to have to last us a long time."

I clenched my fists and tried to swallow the hot, dry taste in my mouth. I picked up another slice of salami and sucked it dry. He ate his food slowly, as if relishing the taste. . . . When the meal was over, I almost reached for a cigarette automatically. I caught my hand in time and just sat there, waiting.

At last, Andrews said, "The smoking lamp is lighted, Simpson."

"Thank you, sir," I said politely, wanting to strangle him. I lighted a cigarette and leaned back in the boat. The sun rested on the horizon like an upright coin on a table top. Then it dropped suddenly below the water line, and soon the sea turned a menacing black The stars poked curious noses into the sky. I watched them come out, savoring the smoke of a second cigarette, and had almost forgotten everything that had happened —when Andrews' voice snapped me out of my reverie.

"A few more minutes, Simpson," he said.

I sat up abruptly and flicked my cigarette over the side. "We might as well get started right now," I said.

I saw the surprised look in Andrews' eyes. I'd cheated him out of what he thought was a magnanimous gesture—those extra few moments of smoking. I was glad, even though I was denying myself pleasure.

I rowed until ten o'clock, then Andrews decided we'd had enough for one day, and he told me to turn in. I still didn't think he knew just where we were heading.

I curled up in the bow and tried to make myself comfortable. In three seconds flat, I was fast asleep. . . .

The sharks were following us when I woke up the next morning.

I was lying flat on my back, with one hand slightly over the side of the boat. The sun was bright orange on my closed eyelids; I opened them and rolled my head to one side, looking out over the water.

The triangular fins cruising alongside sent a crazy fear through me. I yanked my arm back, held it close to my chest, almost expecting to see the hand gone.

"Andrews!" I shouted.

He bounced up erect, sleep clinging to the lines of his mouth, sleep showing in his bloated face and bleary eyes.

"What the—"

"Sharks," I said, "all around us. Sharks—" My fingers gripped the sides of the boat, and I kept staring at the silent gray fins moving around us.

Andrews looked over the side, then rubbed his fists into his eyes. "What time is it?" he asked.

"Eight, sir," I said.

"We've overslept," he said. "I think we'll have to stand watches after this."

"The sharks, sir!"

"What about them?" he snapped.

"They—"

"They won't bother us. Don't worry about them."

"But—"

"I said they won't bother us."

"I'd feel a lot happier if *they* said that, sir."

Andrews turned a blank stare on me. "Why is it that I've never been able to appreciate the wit of a subordinate officer?" he asked.

"Perhaps—"

"Perhaps it's because I've never met a subordinate officer who *had* any wit," Andrews interrupted.

"A joke needs a narrator *and* an audience, sir," I said.

He glared at me menacingly. "What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Let's get moving, Simpson."

I PICKED up the oars and began rowing. My hands began to blister. The sweat had caked my shirt, and my face was covered with a light bristle that was uncomfortable in the heat. The sun was rapidly climbing into the sky, shedding heat like a dripping steel ladle. Andrews took the canteen out several times and drank with swift, short gulps. He offered it to me once. Only once.

"Shouldn't we share the water, sir?" I asked.

"There's plenty of water," he said. "Twelve canteens in the stern." As

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

About the only thing in common the 12 famous men listed below have is their first name: GEORGE. *Can you, from the thumbnail sketch in each instance, fill in the blank spaces (provided for) with their correct last names? By Joseph C. Stacey*

(SEVEN *correct answers is fair; 8-9 is good; 10 excellent)*

(1) **GEORGE** ______ (Famous composer; he wrote "Rhapsody in Blue")

(2) **GEORGE** ______ (The "Father of our Country")

(3) **GEORGE** ______ (General; former Secretary of State)

(4) **GEORGE** ______ (Famous baseball player; he was nicknamed "Babe," and clouted 60 homers in one season)

(5) **GEORGE** ______ (Admiral; he destroyed the Spanish Fleet in Manila Bay)

(5) **GEORGE** ______ (General; he commanded the famed "Third Army" during World War II)

(7) **GEORGE** ______ (World-renowned author; Irish; his middle name: Bernard)

(8) **GEORGE** ______ (Explorer; he and Meriwether Lewis explored the Northwest Territory)

(9) **GEORGE** ______ (General; he and his men were massacred at Little Big Horn by forces of Sitting Bull)

(10) **GEORGES** ______ (Boxer; French; he fought Jack Dempsey in 1921, and lost)

ANSWERS:

(1) Gershwin; (2) Washington; (3) Marshall; (4) Ruth; (5) Dewey; (6) Patton; (7) Shaw; (8) Clark; (9) Custer; (10) Carpentier.

if to demonstrate his point, he lifted one of the canteens and shook it.

I listened as he shook, and then I saw his eyebrows climb up onto his forehead. He shook the canteen again. Gingerly, he unscrewed the cap and let it dangle from its short chain. He peered into the canteen and then tilted it slightly, holding his palm open beneath it. He tilted it more, and finally turned it upside down. It was empty.

He dug around among the other canteens in the stern of the boat, shaking them all. Of the twelve, one contained water.

HE was angry. His face turned the color of his hair, and he swore like a deckhand.

"That's what I mean about discipline!" he bellowed. "What the hell kind of a captain would allow his lifeboats to go to pot like this? Who the devil was your last First Mate, Simpson?"

"A very nice guy named Charlie," I told him levelly.

"A *very* nice guy who allowed his boats to—"

"I'm sure he had no idea we were going to ram a derelict," I said.

"I've had just about enough of your comments, Simpson," Andrews said, his voice high and brittle. "Just about enough."

I didn't answer him. I kept rowing and thinking of the sharks that surrounded the boat. What was to stop me from picking up an oar and creasing Andrews' skull with it? A quick push over the side—and the sharks would do the rest.

The First stared at me as if he were reading my mind. He reached behind him then and dug around in the provisions. When he held his hands out again, they were holding a .45 automatic. He pressed a finger against the magazine catch, and the clip slid out into his palm. He checked the load and shoved the clip home again. It snapped into place with a deadly click. The barrel glinted blue in the sunlight, and the gun looked powerful and heavy.

He didn't say anything. He didn't have to. It was all there in those cold gray eyes, the warning and the command.

"I think, we'd better have less talk and more rowing," he said at last.

"Whatever you say, sir," I told him. My eyes never left the .45 in his right hand. It dangled between his knees like a cannon ready to explode, a cannon ready to back up the authority of a First Mate who was command-happy.

It got hot later on in the day. I rowed all day, with only four breaks for food or rest, and my muscles protested with agonizing pain.

As I rowed the heat seemed to crawl over my back, climb up my neck, smolder in the hair on my head. The air was like a breath from a blast furnace, and the sea shimmered like a blue-green mirror for miles around us; and always there were the sharks, calm, patient, waiting.

I began to associate Andrews with all my ills. I blamed him for the heat and for the sunken ship and for the sharks and for the blisters on my hands. He was the cause of it all, and he sat there like a big, red monster with his powerful fingers around the walnut stock of the .45, his gray eyes inscrutable as he stared out over the bow of the dinghy. There was an electric shimmer of hostility between us, an anger that flared whenever our eyes met. I thought of all the officers I'd known since I'd been around ships and on ships—nice guys for the most part. I thought of all the officers aboard the *Masterway,* and I began wishing that Andrews was any of them, anyone but the man he was. I was even willing to settle for the skipper. Anyone but Andrews.

And then I began thinking again how nice it would be if there *were* no Andrews.

The sun left the sky, and the stars shoved their fiery beaks into the blackness of night. By the time I fell asleep, my hands blistered and my back muscles aching, the thought had become a gnawing cancer in my mind.

I didn't sleep well that night.

The next morning, when he woke me, he announced in a flat, expressionless voice, "We'll have to catch a shark."

I stared at him for a few moments, thinking maybe the heat had got to him. "What, sir?"

"We'll have to catch one of these sharks."

"Why?" I asked. I was tired, and I didn't want to argue with someone who'd had too much sun.

"We're out of water," he explained. "We can get water from the shark's—"

"What do you mean, we're out of water?" I asked, my voice rising.

"Just what I said. The water is all gone."

"We had a full canteen and a half last night," I told him.

"Well, we haven't any now."

"Where did it go?" I shouted.

"It's gone," he repeated. "We're going to catch a shark."

"Maybe *you're* going to catch a shark," I retorted. *"I'm* not going to catch a damned thing."

I'd forgotten all about the .45 in his fist. I was thinking only of the water we'd had, the water he'd gorged himself with.

"I'm still giving the orders around here, Simpson," he said. He brought the gun up slowly and held it just alongside his hip. The big open muzzle was pointed at my head.

"I think we'll catch that shark now," he said, pulling his lips back over his teeth. His hair had become a shade lighter from the sun, and his face had been burned darker. His eyes gleamed now as he waved the .45 at me, and he looked for all the world like Satan sitting there in the sternsheets.

I looked at the .45, and then my eyes met the bright gleam in his own. This was no time to start an argument, I decided.

"What's your plan?" I asked.

"I'll shoot the closest shark, and you'll pull him aboard."

"What about the other sharks?" I asked.

"What about them?"

"You know as well as I do 'What about them!' They'll be over the dead shark in ten seconds flat; they'll be kill crazy as soon as they smell the blood."

"So?"

"So what happens to my hands down there in the water?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing, except I lose them. No, thanks, I don't want any bloody stumps, thanks."

"I'll shoot the sharks just as soon as they come close," he said.

"Tell you what, Andrews. You give *me* the gun, and I'll shoot while you scoop the corpses out of the water. How does that sound?"

"I'll do any shooting that's to be done," he said in a dead voice. I looked at the .45 again, stared at the deadly menace of the muzzle, at his palm pressed tight against the safety grip.

"All right," I said; "we'll do it your way."

I LEANED close to the side of the dinghy. There were at least a dozen fins on the water, swimming close together, almost like a squadron of planes in formation. How long would it take twelve sharks to rip my arms from their sockets? How fast could I lug a dead carcass from the water? How much did these sharks weigh?

"They're too far away," he said softly. He was standing alongside me, the gun pointed out at the water. "We need some bait."

"Want me to dangle my arm over the side?" I asked sarcastically.

"Yes," he answered. "They'll get curious and come to see what it is."

"What?"

"Stick your arm in the water, Simpson," he commanded. "Now!"

There was menace in his voice again. I looked at the circling fins and wondered whether it was better to lose my arm or my life. What was

better: a bleeding stump, or a hole between the eyes?

I stuck my arm into the water.

The fins seemed to move forward together, as the sharks idled toward the spot where my hand entered the water.

"Shoot!" I shouted.

A gray blur brushed my hand. Perhaps the next shark would decide to use his rows and rows of sharp, white teeth.

"Shoot!" I bellowed, yanking my arm from the water as the closest shark made a sudden pass at it. The pointed snout arced up at the sky, and I heard the deadly click of snapping teeth. The white underside of the shark flashed into view; then the .45 barked twice and red spouted on the white, like two blossoming roses against snow.

"Pull him up," Andrews shouted.

I stuck my hands into the water and reached for the shark's slippery hide. He rolled free of my hands, and I made a stab at his tail, gripping it tightly as he swept by. The power of his lunge almost tore my arms off, but I hung on, and his body became still and lifeless as I started to haul him aboard.



My arm was the bait. I plunged it into the water and a shark brushed my haod. "Shoot!" I bellowed. I yanked my arm clear just as the white underside and deadly teeth flashed into view.

THE other sharks raced at the boat as the blood spread on the water like crimson oil slick.

"Shoot!" I shouted again.

I heard the crack of the .45, and another shark lunged over, blood gushing out of the hole in its belly. I kept tugging on the first shark, trying to get a good grip. The rest of the pack circled frantically, tearing the second shark to shreds. The blood covered the water like a red canopy. I got a solid grip around the shark's body and started to drag him over the side.

Another shark lunged at the boat and I heard the .45 go off again. Four shots. Andrews squeezed off another shot, and the shark sank beneath the surface. Five shots.

There were seven shots in the .45 clip. Seven shots.

"Shoot!" The First Mate triggered off another shot. The sharks had finished with their dead mate, and now they snapped at the other dead fish, their jaws clicking, their white bellies flashing with each new cannibalistic swoop.

Six shots. One more to go. I stalled with the dead shark. I could have heaved him into the boat at any time now. But I wanted Andrews to trigger off the last shot. We'd be even then. Just him and me, and no gun.

Another shark lunged at the boat and I heard the .45 go off with a deafening roar. I swung the first shark over the side and it flopped onto its back in the bottom of the boat.

"All right, you so-and-so," I said.

He stared at me as if dumfounded; then a smile crossed his face, and he brought up the .45.

"This boat is getting a little crowded," he said.

"That's just what I was thinking, *sir!*"

"Suppose I ordered you to jump overboard, Simpson?"

"Try it and see."

"You'd have to obey, you know. I'm your superior officer."

"Sure," I said, beginning to enjoy it now. "Go ahead. Order me."

He hesitated, and the spark of confidence waned briefly in his eyes for a moment. It returned almost immediately, accompanied by an indolent leer. "It might be an interesting experiment, at that."

"And if I refuse, what are you going to do? Report me to the skipper? Report me to the company? Just what?"

The First Mate glanced significantly at the .45.

"Oh," I said, "you're going to shoot me? Go ahead, shoot. I'd like to see you shoot with an empty clip."

His features froze, and he yanked out the clip. The boat rolled a little with a sudden wave, and he spread his legs wide, trying to keep his balance. There were still four or five sharks circling around the boat, infuriated by the smell of blood.

"No more cannon," I said. "Just you and me, *sir.*" I waved my arm to include the ocean. "Just you and me and the wide-open spaces. How does it feel?"

"This is mutiny," he muttered.

"Sure," I said, "but who'll ever try the case?"

"When we get to land—"

"Look," I said, "stop kidding yourself. You don't know where we are. It all looks the same out there, so stop playing navigator."

"You'll lose your ticket for this, Simpson. You'll—"

"Yeah? You forget, *sir,* there are just the two of us. Just you and me. That's all. The only survivors. You—and me."

"I don't have to take this kind of talk from any snotnosed—"

"Shut up!" I shouted. I was good and sore now. The blisters on my hands were open and painful, and my back ached, and I was dying for a cigarette and a drink of water. The sweat stood out in great beads on my forehead, and I could feel the muscles in my throat tighten as I clenched my fists and leaned forward.

Andrews' face flushed with rage. He stared down at the .45 on the palm of his hand.

I was ready for the gun as it came sailing through the air. I ducked and it flew over my head and into the water. It made a dull splashing sound when it hit the surface, and then it sank quickly and quietly.

"What now, *Mr.* Andrews?" I asked.

He didn't answer. He lunged forward instead, his eyes gleaming, his fingers widespread. There was hatred in his face, and naked murder. The sweat covered his arms and his exposed chest, rolled down the side of his nose, hung in droplets on his jaw.

He reached for me, and I shoved him back. The boat rocked as he tripped over the thwart amidships and stumbled to the bottom. He scrambled to his feet, one hand digging for his belt. He crouched over for a moment, and I saw the glint of sun on steel as the sheath knife swung upward in his clenched fist.

A sudden fear lurched its way up my spine, the natural fear of knives coupled with fear generated by the mad look in his eyes. He came forward slowly, like a boxer, still in his crouch, the knife slicing the air ahead of him like a scythe.

I watched the sun flicker off the sharp edge of the blade, watched the way the knife cut at the air, watched his strong fingers covered with curling red hair.

He leaped forward suddenly, and I braced myself.

The knife glittered in the sun, a shining arc of light as it reached for my shoulder. I felt its tip make a jagged slash down the length of my arm. My shirt suddenly sprouted a red line from my shoulder to my wrist, and I wanted to retch.

He came in again, more confident now, convinced it was all over.

His wrist flashed out. My fingers opened wide and then tightened on hard bone and muscle. His arm was sweating, and his wrist slippery, but I hung on, the knife tantalizingly close, the point glistening wet and sharp.

I whipped his arm up and then shoved hard, with all the strength of my body. He staggered backward, his arm flailing. The heels of his feet slapped against the hulk of the dead shark in the bottom of the boat. He kept stumbling backward, tripping over the shark. He reached for the side of the boat and the boat tilted crazily, scooping up water over the starboard gunwale. I threw myself over to the port side.

A terrified scream split the air, and I saw the First Mate's hands clawing at the wood of the boat. Then he was over the side.

The sharks didn't waste a moment.

I turned away as the screams died on the air. And then I retched. . . .

Four days later the tanker picked me up. The details are still hazy because I was lying half-dead on the bottom of the boat when they spotted me.

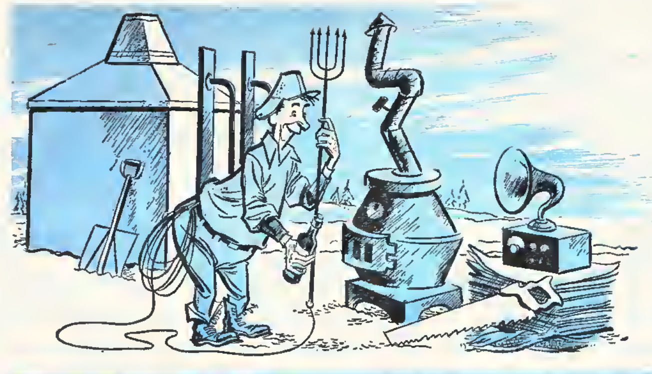
They dressed my arm, and I told them I'd been cut when I abandoned ship. And then, when I was able to listen, they told me about the rescue. They said they almost passed me by until they'd seen a reflection of sunlight far out on the water.

When they'd pulled closer, they'd found me on the bottom of the boat. And they'd also found the source of the reflection:

The blade of a sheath knife. •



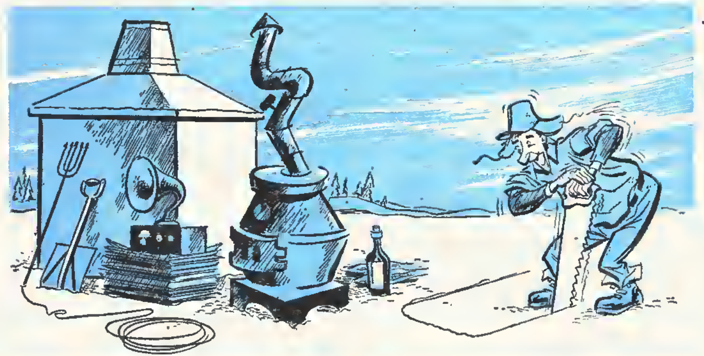
"I don't know about marriage—but I'll agree it should promote some sort of proposal."

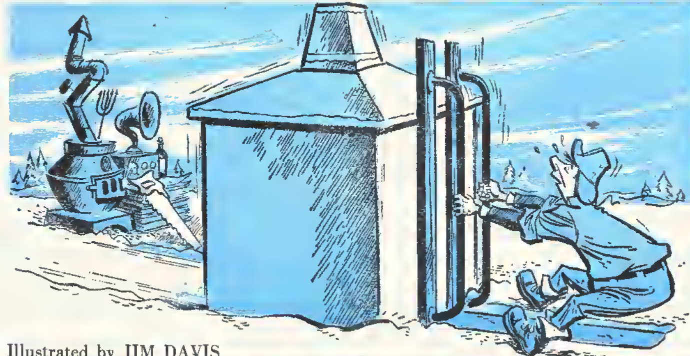


How to catch a STURGEON

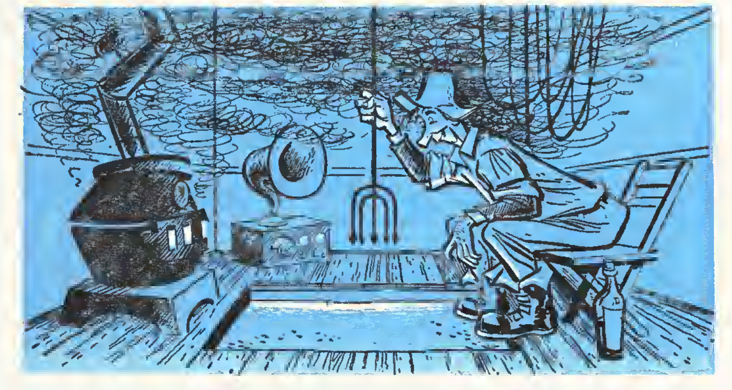
. . . or how to spend Sunday in a windowless shanty, in February, when all the other joints are closed.

• By JONATHAN G. WALDRON





Illustrated by JIM DAVIS



IN ORDER TO CATCH A STURGEON, you need two ears of shell corn, fifty feet of chalk line, a spear, a bundle of old newspapers, a quart of whisky, a portable radio, two suits of woolen underwear, a stove, an ice chisel and a saw. You also need a fishing shanty, but let's assume you've got a fishing shanty. And you *could* get along without the whisky, but let's assume you can't.

All right. The first thing you do, you chop a hole in the ice three feet wide by six feet long. This is the approved-size hole in Wisconsin's Fox River Valley, where the sturgeon-spearers are considered to be experts, and where the sturgeon themselves are probably the most expert sturgeon afloat—the wiliest, that is to say.

Okay. You've got the hole trimmed out nice and neat through twenty, or twenty-five inches of clear, clean Wisconsin ice. With what strength remains, you drag your portable shanty over the opening, and with the strength then remaining you bank it up with snow to keep out the wind and light. You are now ready to catch a sturgeon.

Well, not quite. There are certain preliminary measures to be taken care of first. To begin with, there's the matter of lighting the stove and getting it regulated so that asphyxiation won't interfere with your sport. Then there's the matter of not falling into the hole and drowning. There are no windows in your shanty, of course, and it takes a little time for your eyes to adjust from the outside glare to the inside gloom. In the past men have been known to walk into their shanties and right out through a three-by-six-foot gate into some other,

unknown world. You don't want to do this, naturally.

Not with an untouched quart of whisky in your Mackinaw pocket.

So you don't fall into the hole. And pretty soon your eyes have picked up the light that comes in through the water and you discover that you can see quite well, after all. The stove is going now, it's cozy, your square little windswept home looks good. You hang up your five-tine, razor-sharp spear, with the tips of the barbs about a foot above the luminous water, the spear-handle suspended by a thread from the ceiling for easy breaking and hurling. You are *now* ready to catch a sturgeon.

Previous to this, of course, you have baited the site of your establishment. This is where the shell corn comes in. It dangles in the water, turning and gleaming, and acts, presumably, as an irresistible lure to the fish. As for the newspapers—these have been carefully torn into strips and sent floating down to the muddy bottom where they have distributed themselves in such a way as to provide a nice white background for the lured and ill-fated fish. There is nothing to do now but sit and wait for that ninety-pound sturgeon to arrive.

It is a fact—an uncomfortable, cold, melancholy fact—that a man can sit (and will sit) for as long as six years, waiting for his fish. But it is also a fact—and this lends brightness to the peculiar sport of sturgeon-spearing—that a man can latch onto a fish in as little as six minutes. And this is the moment, as they say in bullfighting, of truth.

Fishing being what it is, it is also the moment when enormous and sad lies are engendered. But in either case it is a moment no man ever will forget. All hell breaks loose beneath the shanty. With a heave and a lunge and a mighty threshing, the sturgeon breaks for freedom—an act of violence and rebellion that can turn a shack inside out in a twinkling and leave the spearman sprawled in the wreckage, the wreckage burning, and the portable radio squawking miserably in the ruins. But if the man is lucky, he'll still be latched onto the fish, and, with a little more luck, he'll get the bugger out of the water and into the daylight. From then on it's an easy dream: fat, fresh sturgeon smoked over white-oak chips—nothing like it.

The ancient art of sturgeon-spearing has all but vanished from the United States. The Fox River Valley of Wisconsin is one of the few places remaining in this country where sturgeon survive in sufficient numbers to make it seem worth-while. This particular fish—it is called the lake sturgeon—is one of about twenty species scattered over the globe, in both fresh water and salt water, growing to terrific proportions in some places.

In Russia, for instance, sturgeon have been taken weighing as much as 2000 pounds and growing to twenty-four feet or more in length. Like a submarine loaded with a cargo of caviar, it's the mainstay of the gourmet's market.

The Lake Sturgeon, on the other hand, has become a sporting fish in this country, protected from commercial fishermen, and at a hundred or a hundred twenty pounds it is more than enough for one man to handle.

When a new lake—Lake Poygan—was opened to the sturgeon-spearers last year (it had long been closed and protected by the Wisconsin Conservation Department) there was a considerable flurry of excitement throughout the State. Lake Winnebago, the largest of Wisconsin's lakes, had provided a limited amount of excitement over the years, but Poygan was something new and different. There were plenty of fish nosing along the mudflats—you could see them in the spring, rolling in the shallows like great black logs—and it was simply a question of where, exactly, to find them beneath all that ice and snow in the month of February.

Attention focused at once, quite naturally, on the village of Winneconne. Winneconne is more or less the center of things when it comes to sturgeon fishing. It's a haven for duck-hunters, too—for sportsmen of all shapes and sizes—but the smell of smoked sturgeon was in the air when the lake was opened, and the big problem was the problem posed by Lake Poygan itself. There were only a few men in town—men like Henry P. Severson and Leon Quigley and George Korn—who knew the big lake intimately enough to be considered authorities in the matter of sturgeon-spearing, and it was to these men that the uninstructed were forced to turn for their initiation into the old art of taking a sea-going mountain lion with a five-tine spear.

Severson, Quigley and Korn agreed that this particular old art was the art of patience, first and foremost. After that it was anybody's game. And quite naturally there was some divergence of opinion among these gentlemen after their initial show of harmony.

How could it be otherwise? Henry P. Severson is a quiet man, a churchgoer, and he would naturally favor a quiet, thoughtful approach to the hole in the ice. Korn runs a sporting-goods store, and it certainly would be unwise of him to recommend shell corn for a lure when a shiny, expensive aluminum lure would do just as well. As for Leon Quigley—he had nothing to say at all. Quigley is the kind of man you have to study carefully, putting questions to him and then watching his eyebrows and the expression of his mouth for the answer.

And so in the end, when the season at last opened—and all this was inevitable, of course—there were as many philosophies as there were philosophers, and as great a variety of equipment as anyone possibly could imagine. Some of the uninstructed got their instructions from Severson, Korn and Quigley. Others listened patiently, in stores and bars, to the second-hand advice of the uninstructed themselves. The newcomers from Milwaukee and Chicago had to do what they could with scraps of information and no philosophy at all.

When the shacks were set up at last, they were scattered all over the lake, from Grave's Mistake to Goose Island. There were many remodeled privies among them; there were some old-time shacks with a cupola atop to accommodate the handle of the spear—these were built in the days before the new spear with the detachable head—and there were tents; all snugly insulated against the cold. It was obvious now that the sturgeon were fighting, if not a losing game, at least a difficult one.

It was estimated that there were at least four hundred hunters arrayed against them. The Conservation officials, however, had foreseen that the fish might be overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers, and they had made the announcement that, if necessary, the lake would be closed on twenty-four hours' notice.

As it turned out, it was not necessary to close the lake. The catch was good in the two weeks' season from Feb. 15 to March 1—but not damaging. Approximately 800 fish were

DECISION DERISION

She says decisians rest with me
As master of the hause.
She seems to be impressed with me,
An odd thing in o spouse.

I mull our problems; cons ond pros
Ga beating through my head.
I sort ond bolonce, choose, dispase
Upon my sleepless bed.

I search aut, thraugh subjective hells,
The caurse we shauld pursue,
Annaunce my findings, then she tells
Me what we'll *really* da.

—Tom Tolman.

taken, the affair was given enthusiastic coverage by outdoor writers on Wisconsin newspapers, and the Conservation Department pronounced the experiment successful.

I found myself on Poygan the Sunday after the season opened. I had checked in with Henry P. Severson earlier and we had an amiable chat in his living-room, over a cup of coffee. He told me about a minister, long ago, who had got his line tangled around his leg and who for two hours fought and struggled against getting pulled into the hole. It was only by dint of a great deal of prayer and a rational appeal to Heaven that he finally won out over the fish.

"I think he made a deal with the Almighty," Henry said, his eyes twinkling. "He never came right out and said so—not to my knowledge anyway—but I noticed that every year after that, and always on the same Sunday in February, he preached a sermon on Jonah and the whale. He put more into that sermon than any other sermon during the year. He was inspired, you might say, and when he described Jonah's feelings inside that whale he could make the shivers run up and down your back. It was a pleasure to hear him."

I asked Henry if he had ever heard of anyone's actually being hauled into the hole by a fish, and he said no, not to his knowledge. "It could easily happen, though," he said.

I asked him then if torn-up newspapers made a better background, or eggshells.

"Eggshells," he said.

"Now I'll tell you a sad story," he went on. "I knew a man once who sat out there on the ice for three years, waiting for a sturgeon. Everything in the world swam by his nose—walleyes, muskellunge, bass and mermaids—anything you might want to imagine except the fish he actually wanted to see. But finally, at the end of three years, the big shadow came floating up to take a look at the lure shining in the water. The fellow grasped his spear, drove it into the fish and gave a big whoop and a holler because at last he was being rewarded for his patience. But that whoop died in his throat like the gurgle of a man being strangled. He saw his line flying out, and it flew right out and disappeared. It had been touching the stove and had burned through. This fellow just sat down and cried like a baby."

"Who was this fellow?" I said. "It wasn't you by any chance, was it?"

"Might have been," he said. "But it wasn't." He stood up, smiling, to shake hands. He said I'd find Leon Quigley at Willow Point, like as not. The others were moving their shacks around a lot, trying to get the feel of the lake, but Leon was staying put. He was too old to be chopping holes all over creation.

Out in the blue-and-white Sunday-afternoon glitter on Lake Poygan, there was a great deal of activity. There were at least four hundred shanties scattered over the surface of the snow. Some were in the process of being moved and you could hear the cries of the men in the windless, icy air, as they strained and tugged, trying to break the runners free of the ice. A spiderweb of paths had spread itself out over the snow of the lake and figures were moving about on the paths in a lazy, easy pattern—visitors, spectators, friends and relatives of the fishermen paying social calls, the fishermen themselves carrying cans of oil for their stoves, a few of them carrying fish homeward. In the distance I could see an Army tent set up in the snow. I had read about it in the paper that morning.



Gordon MacQuarrie, outdoor writer for the *Milwaukee Journal*, had investigated this curiosity and found it contained a sociable group of local gentlemen who had set up the 20x20 shelter, and were very happily drinking beer together and peering into a hole that ran the whole length of the tent. It sounded like a very sensible arrangement.

The shacks were beginning to cluster together, I noticed, most of them in the vicinity of Richter's Bay where some good catches had been made. At the edge of this group I found George Korn's shack, with a sturgeon in the snow outside the door and George standing there looking at it happily. It was a medium-sized fish and George had clipped his silver tag to its black tail. It was still struggling, its gills slowly opening and falling back again—a strange-looking fish, horny and ugly, with a snout like an F-86 and a mouth like a suction pump way down on its belly. But this, of course, is extremely practical from the point of view of the sturgeon, since he feeds on the mud-flats more or less in the manner of a vacuum cleaner.

George said he was through for the day. Tomorrow he'd buy another tag and try it again. He had a new lure he wanted to try out, too—a wooden sturgeon with two red eyes and two blue eyes. It looked promising.

"The tags cost a dollar apiece," he said.

"What are the others using for lures?" I asked.

"Everything. It's the same old story. Can covers, Christmas tree ornaments, insides of thermos bottles. One guy is even using a bowling pin." He bent down to pick up the fish. "Should go about thirty pounds. Nice fish. If you see Leon, tell him I've gone in."

Leon was sitting outside his shack at Willow Point, smoking his pipe—a big man, an ex-farmer with seven grown kids, and a good man with a spear. I told him George had quit for the day and he nodded and knocked out his pipe and invited me in.

I sat with him in his shanty the rest of the afternoon, "watching the hole." He told me the Nichol boys were out over the channel on that thin ice. He couldn't see any sense in that himself. The way he figured, it was better to sleep in a bed at night instead of underneath the ice some place.

We were silent then, watching the blue light filter up through the water. An occasional gar swam by, and once or twice Leon picked one up with his spear, let it thrash around for a moment or two and then took it to the door and threw it outside.

We didn't see any sturgeon at all that afternoon—whicb was not unusual. I noticed, though, that Leon was turning some problem over in his mind, and toward the end of the afternoon, he told me what it was. "You know," he said. "Henry Plummer's kid got a forty-pounder yesterday."

"He did?" I said.

"Yeah . . ." He pondered this matter for a while. "Happens that he's got a radio in his shanty. A battery job. Had some music going at the time. . . ." He reached up and scratched his chin thoughtfully. "You suppose them radios and that music attracts 'em?"

"I dunno," I said. "What song was it playing at the time?"

Leon chuckled "I'll find out from George tonight. If it works I'll let you know." •



"Stick me with your worthless land, will you,

the Swindle

Snake River Jim's medicine cured a variety of ills, but it could hardly be expected to cure TB or reform a town or discover oil.

By WILBUR S. PEACOCK

Snake River Jim chuckled aloud, and the friendly sound raced across the crowd and brought answering smiles. This was the fourth night now that he had made his pitch in the empty lot on Tulsa's main street. The crowds had been good, their buying power better, and within a week he would move on, his money-belt packed even tighter with big green-and-yellow bills.

"Friends," he cried to the crowd pressing tight to the down-drop stage-apron of the medicine wagon, "do your bones ache at night? Do you have muscle cramps or the twitchets? Is your back a pillar of fire?" He waved the slim bottle before him in a



you damned swindler!" Rance Sherman almost danced in his fury. "You dirty crook, you salted that land!" Snake River chuckled innocently.

slow movement. "Then let me tell you of Chief Thunderhead's Snake Oil, the panacea for all aches and pains, the emollient against which muscles, tired and weary, cannot fight. Let me tell of this miracle medicine, this nature's remedy, this balsam I have brought to you at great expense from the sacred sachems of the Indians of the great Northwest."

Smoky light flared from the great coal-oil torches at either end of the stage, painting the ornate gold and red and blue of the medicine van with flickering shadows. Snake River Jim stood alone, banjo laid across the single folding chair, and behind him were fanciful banners, emblazoned boldly, telling all who would read of the miraculous powers of Elixir of Life and Chief Thunderhead's Snake Oil.

"Have you ever seen a sick Indian? Have you ever seen one who wasn't as supple as a whip?" Snake River cast his plea. "Then listen to me, my friends. Here in my hand I hold the secret. Compounded of twenty-seven snake oils, fourteen rare and precious herbs, and prepared only by the men of Chief Thunderhead's tribe, I alone have been given the right to bring you this health-giving cure for the pains and aches of all mankind."

His piratical mustaches flared and his hair was white and long beneath his Stetson. He was an imposing figure, standing tall and straight, the rattlesnake buttons of his snakeskin vest chittering softly witb each movement.

He saw a man at the edge of the crowd, and for a moment a spark of deviltry lighted his eyes. He and the Sheriff had tangled before, and usually to the Sberiff's discomfiture. Once more he might be used, even if reluctantly.

"Take a look," he boomed, and pointed with his free hand. "There is the Sherifl, and he holds no love for me, not since four years ago when Millie Ashbaugh and I took the big hoedown-dance prize away from bim and his lady friend." He smiled, seeing the flush coming to the Sheriff's face. "Why, he'd close my show in a minute, if he could prove that I was

telling a lie or misrepresenting the medicines I sell. Isn't that right, Sheriff?"

"I'll close you, anyway, some day, you fourflusher!" the Sheriff roared. "And I wouldn't use that medicine of yours on a sick goat!"

Snake River Jim laughed aloud; the Sheriff was all blow and no strike, like a puff adder in the dust.

"There you are, folks," his words boomed at the crowd, "even the Sheriff is on my side! Course he doesn't advocate the use of my medicaments for goats—but then, neither do I! Human aches and human pains, with those I deal. So step right up and buy a million dollars' worth of health for a single dollar. Only one bottle to a customer, and the directions are on each and every label. Chief Thunderhead's Snake Oil, the perfect panacea for all aches and pains. The supply is limited, but don't rush. Now, who'll be the first to buy?"

And then he was passing out bottles of the medicine, his voice laughing and never still, the bottles vanishing before him, his pockets filling tighter and tighter with each passing moment. This was the final pitch, and it had been a good one, and as always, he was sorry the evening was over.

Half an hour later, the last of the crowd drifting away down Tulsa's streets, Snake River Jim whistled to himself and capped the torches.

"Mr. Snake River?"

He turned and saw the couple on the ground below, their clothes marking them as country people. The woman had called him, and now she coughed, a deep racking cough that tore at her slender body. In a second, the paroxysm was gone; but Snake River had seen and heard others marked with the same disease.

He lifted his Stetson. "Can I help you, ma'am?" he asked.

"Molly, come away," the man said then, tugging at her arm. "There's nothing this fellow can do."

The woman cried at that, leaning against the apron, and the muffled sobbing was hard and ugly in the night. Snake River waited, not knowing what to say.

Then he leaped from the apron to the ground. "Bring her around to the rear," he said. "I've coffee on." He saw the stiffness in the man, and hardness crept into his tone. "I said, bring her around to the rear."

He led the way, brooking no argument, and only after the couple sat on folding chairs, cups of steaming coffee in their hands, did he speak.

"Ma'am," he said gently, "I am not a complete charlatan. My Elixir is a tonic, not a cure-all."

She smiled then, and he liked the warmness of her eyes. "I don't want medicine, Mr. Snake River," she said. "I wanted to ask if you remembered a boy named Danny Tremaine?"

Snake River grinned past his coffee cup. "Danny! Glory, yes, but I'd hardly call him a boy."

The woman nodded. "I'm Molly Tremaine, and this is my husband Ben. Danny is Ben's brother."

"Well, I'll be darned!" Snake River cocked his head. "Can't see much resemblance, but sure glad to meet you, anyway. How is Danny? Haven't seen him in a couple of years!"

"He's fine," Ben Tremaine answered. "Anyway, that's why Molly wanted to see you. Since you got Dan out of that rustling scrape, she figured you might—well, help us." His face hardened. "I don't see it that way, though; I figure a gun would do the job much better."

"Gun?" Snake River whistled softly. "Your trouble that big?"

He lit a stogie, all humor gone from his eyes now. He saw the touch of Molly's hand upon her husband's arm, and sensed that the bond between them was a deep and honest emotion.

"It's this way, Mr. Snake River," Molly said. "We bought a parcel of land just outside of Tulsa a year ago. We lived Pennsylvania-way, and a lot of friends bought at the same time as we did. We paid four thousand dollars, and the land isn't worth two. It's scrub land, not even fit for pasture. We were gypped, and Rance Sherman, who sold us the land, won't do anything about it."

Snake River Jim sighed. This was an old story, repeated in a hundred places, as people moved westward. Land speculators were all over the East, promoting the sale of land to the west, promising the moon and giving nothing. They couldn't be touched by the law; they were far too clever for that. Legally, they were safe, but morally, they were like coyotes, sneaking and cowardly and rotten.

"You want your money back, so you can return to Pennsylvania?" he asked.

"That's it," Tremaine said harshly.

"Uh-uh!" Snake River shook his head. "Tell you what I'll do. I've got about sixty acres of land close to Leadville in Colorado." He looked at Molly. "You should be in a higher and dryer climate—else you'll cough your life away. I think, maybe, you folks should be living on that land."

"Now, listen, Mister—" Ben Tremaine began warningly, but his wife cut short his words.

"What is it, Mr. Snake River?" she asked.

Snake River lit a twisty stogie. "Tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'll buy your land for what you paid—but only on the condition that you take a *pasear* out to Leadville and look over my land. If you like it, then I'll sell it to you at whatever you think it's worth."

Ben Tremaine shook his head. "I don't know what your game is, but I'm not falling for it."

"Is there, Mr. Snake River?" Molly asked then. "Is there a game?"

Snake River smiled, preening his mustaches. "Not yet," he admitted. "Maybe later; but right now the thing to do is get worry off your mind and send you out where you have a chance at regaining your health." He chuckled. "I won't lose a two-bit piece on the deal!"

"I still think there's a trick somewhere," Tremaine muttered.

"Is there anybody in Tulsa whom you trust?"

Tremaine frowned. "Well, there's Jenkins, the banker, and a lawyer named Thomas."

"Good!" Snake River arose. "Mrs. Tremaine, would you wait for us here? We'll talk to Jenkins, and if he backs me up, we'll make a deal. Fair enough?"

"It's a deal, Mr. Snake River," Molly said quietly, and a growing peace lay in her eyes and lifted the pain from her face.

"All right," Ben Tremaine agreed then, and bent to kiss his wife.

Snake River turned away, going toward the moonlight-washed road. Excitement stirred in him. There was adventure ahead, nebulous as his plans were at the moment. And the tocsin cry was one which he had followed all his life. He chuckled, and waited for Ben Tremaine.

Tulsa lay quiet against the night. Only a few stragglers were on the streets, and the noise of the saloons was muted by distance. Snake River and Tremaine walked slowly along a side street, their voices stilled, each intent on his thoughts.

"There it is," Tremaine said at last, and turned into the path leading to the porch.

Snake River followed, then went ahead up the steps to the porch. There were no lights, and his knuckles drew a drumming sound from the door startlingly loud in the night. Then a lamp threw splinters of light through the glass of the door, and a lock snicked back, the door opening slowly.

"What the hell time of night—" an angry voice began, and the lamplight caught Snake River in its full flood. "Why, you old catamount, you dirty old crook!" Reef Jenkins roared then. "I was hoping they'd hanged you out in Montana three years ago."

"They tried!" Snake River laughed, and his hand met the banker's in a clasp of friendship which had begun fifty years before. "Guess I'm just not

Illustrated by BOB RIGER

the hanging type." His eyes were wide and friendly. "Well, you inviting us in, Reef?"

"Hell, yes!" Reef Jenkins roared, and stood back, nightshirt flaring out at his ankles, the ruff of white hair tousled about his shining pate. "Get in here, you and whoever's with you."

"It's Ben Tremaine," Tremaine said. "I came because—"

"Who is it, Reef?" a woman's voice called. "And stop that wicked swearing."

"Sally," Snake River Jim called then, and his voice was young and light and bantering. "I've come to elope. Slip into your duds and we'll ride for the parson. To heck with that old mossback you married! I'll buy you diamonds and the finest four-horse brougham in the world."

"Snake River! Oh, it's Snake River!" the cry came back. And a woman was coming along the hall, pulling a wrapper about her plump shoulders, laughter in her face.

"One side, boy," Snake River said; then Sally Jenkins was in his embrace, and he was swinging her up in a gentle hug.

"Hey, now; hey, now!" Reef Jenkins said, but only amusement lay in his eyes.

"You're prettier'n you ever were, Sally," Snake River Jim said. "I should never have let this old coot sneak you away from me."

"Oh, put me down," Sally answered, blushing and smoothing at hair now completely white. "You always could outtalk anybody." She tugged at the showman's hand. "Come in, come in; it's been so long since we saw you last."

"Four years," Snake River agreed. "And by the way, I brought a friend. This here's Ben Tremaine, Sally."

"Howdedo, ma'am," Tremaine said nervously, even more bewildered.

"How do you do," Sally Jenkins said then, and suddenly realized she was not dressed for company. "Oh, dear," she said in distress. "Well, you men go along to the kitchen. I'll be there presently."

Reef Jenkins led the way, and in the kitchen, he lit another lamp, then stirred up the fire and put water on to heat. He asked a hundred questions, and by the time the past few years had been covered, Sally had returned and was making coffee, excitement flushing her face, her questions so rapid and covering so many people and events that Snake River was hard put to find answers.

When at last a break came in the conversation, when all sat back, replete for the moment with question and answer, Snake River Jim nodded at Ben Tremaine.

"Ben here," he said, "thinks I'm a crook, so I brought him along to hear what you had to say."

"Snake River a crook!" Reef Jenkins said, and nodded his bald head. "Glad to give him a recommendation. He's about the slipperiest crook you'll find in the Territory. Don't play cards with him, don't trust him with your wallet, and count your fingers after shaking hands." He beamed at Snake River. "That recommendation good enough?"

Snake River chuckled, seeing the dismay in Tremaine's face. "Good enough for me," he agreed. "But Tremaine's got a four-thousand-dollar stake in this; he's a mite worried."

"Four thousand!" Reef Jenkins cocked his head. "You for or against him?" he asked.

"For him," Snake River answered.

Sally frowned. "Well, stop deviling the poor man," she said and smiled at Ben Tremaine. "You just do whatever Snake River wants you to do," she advised. She looked at the white-haired showman. "What *do* you want him to do?"

"Sell me his ranch," Snake River said easily. "I'm buying it for what he paid, four thousand. Of course, with a provision or two."

"Buying his—" Reef Jenkins shook his head. "Look, Snake River," he argued, "your business is your business, but that land's not worth half



"Snake River, you stop that swearing," Sally said primly. "It's wicked!" Then she smiled.

that. That's part of Sherman's property that he's been unloading on suckers from the East."

"I know," Snake River admitted, "but I want it. Anyway, part of my deal with Tremaine is that he takes a trip out to Leadville with his family and looks at that parcel of land I won in that poker game we had in Tucson —remember?"

"Sure do," Jenkins said, grinning in remembrance. "Lordy, what a game. There was Big-foot Edmonds and Turkey—"

"Oh, hush!" Sally said, and her gaze centered on Snake River. "Why are you doing this?" she asked.

Snake River flushed. "I want to own some land," he said belligerently. "Anyway, I know Ben's brother, and Ben's wife needs a high, dry climate, and, oh, hell, Sally—"

"Stop that swearing, it's wicked!" Sally said primly, then smiled at Ben Tremaine. "Sell him the land, Mr. Tremaine," she finished.

"Then he is all right?" Tremaine said bewilderedly. "But Mr. Jenkins said he was a—"

"I am," Snake River Jim said complacently. He stood and fumbled inside his shirt and then drew out his money belt. "Reef," he finished, "make out the papers, and you and Sally witness them. I'm buying Tremaine's ranch, and he's taking an option on that Colorado land. I'm paying four thousand and Tremaine is optioning for a dollar."

Reef Jenkins shook his head. "I hope you know what you're doing," he said. "The land's not fit for goats, and Rance Sherman is a bad man to tackle. He's got the law bought, and a finger in half the pies in town."

"I'll take my chances," Snake River laughed.

Sally poured fresh coffee, then hesitated, pot in hand. "Snake River," she said, "I don't know what you have in mind. But Rance Sherman is slippery."

"Slippery!" The old showman smiled, leaning back in his chair. A devil's glint came to his gray eyes.

"Slippery, oily, call it what you will." Sally shrugged.

Snake River idly regarded his cigar, a thought twisting nebulously in his mind. A slow chuckle rose.

"I sell Chief Thunderhead's Snake Oil," he said. "Cures the aches of sprains, and could be used for furniture polish." He tapped ashes into a saucer. "Mighty handy stuff." He looked at Jenkins. "Comes from Pennsylvania."

"I don't see—" Reef Jenkins began, and then knowledge glowed in his eyes. "You wouldn't dare!" he finished. "This isn't Cripple Creek."

"Snake River, I'm warning you—" Sally began.

"Please," Ben Tremaine broke in. "I don't know what you're planning, but I don't want more trouble. I've got a family and—"

"Son," Snake River Jim said, and reached for the papers, "the way I figure it, you'll just about reach Colorado when the explosion comes."

"Heh!" Reef Jenkins chuckled. "By damn, heh!"

"Reef, you stop that swearing!" Sally ordered, but she was smiling. "Mr. Tremaine," she finished, "you sign those papers and take your money and get along to Colorado. Snake River doesn't need any help."

Ben Tremaine looked at the old showman, then at the respected banker and his motherly wife. They were honest people, and yet they seemed to trust this spike-bearded man in the snakeskin vest.

"Yes, ma'am," he said in growing wonder, and shaking his head, he reached for the pen and ink Reef handed him from the sideboard.

A WEEK later, Snake River Jim strolled the boardwalks of Tulsa, nodding to passers-by as he went along, knowing none, but liking all. The sun shone bravely and the day was good. Embarked upon an errand which might show a bit of dishonest profit, he was content. He had learned long years before that the gentle art of swindling was not a hit-or-miss affair. In fact, more effort went into it than went into the making of an honest dollar. The true compensation lay in the excitement of the gamble; and for that alone Snake River Jim found a thrill in living.

At the door of the People's Bank, he hesitated long enough to nod to Reef Jenkins in the open window. "I'm on my way to Sherman's now," he said softly, and tipped his hat as he went by; and the banker nodded affably as though they had but passed the time of day.

Then Snake River was at the corner, waiting for a rig to pass. He saw the sign, *"Rance Sherman. Land Investments,"* and somehow his mustaches seemed to flare a bit more piratically. The door creaked as he entered the speculator's office.

"Mr. Sherman?" he said to the fat man slumped in the oversized chair.

Rance Sherman was bald, ugly and pendulous, and Snake River felt an instant aversion.

"I'm Sherman," the fat man said, and measured the showman with canny eyes. His gaze went from the expensive clothes to the diamond on Snake River's hand, and interest grew in his face. "Just what can I do for you?"

"My name's Snake River Jim," the old showman said. "I just bought a piece of land off a man named Ben Tremaine. I understand you own other pieces close to his place."

"Tremaine—" An instant revision of opinion came to Sherman's eyes. "Well, now, as a matter of fact, I don't." He spread fat hands. "I bought a better piece of property the other side of town. You'd do a lot better out there than on Tremaine's property; fact is, he's let his land wash out. Goats couldn't forage there."

"No?" Snake River permitted disbelief and disappointment to creep into his voice. "But he said the land was good, with plenty of water."

Sherman shrugged. "Sure, there's water, not that that means anything. Seepages everywhere. Fact is, Mr.—er—I didn't catch your name?"

"Snake River Jim. I run a medicine show."

"Well, Mr.—Snake River, you surely haven't closed the deal with Tremaine yet?"

"Well, yes," the showman said, and worry was in his tone. "I paid four thousand. Do you think I was gypped?"

Sherman almost strangled. "Four th—" he began, then forced calmness into his voice. "It isn't worth half that. Look, if you want a ranch, why not look at my property? Land value's shooting sky-high, but I can still make you a good deal."

"So I've been gypped!" Snake River Jim forced anger into his face, then let it drain away. He shrugged ruefully and a smile lifted the corners of his mouth. "Oh, well, I'll just have to make the best of it. And since you don't own any of that land, I'd best find those who do. Maybe I can add on a piece or two, making my water rights valuable, at any rate."

"Look, Mister—" Sherman began, and Snake River cut him short.

"Thanks for your time. Good day."

He went from the office and down the stairs and into the sunshine. The stage was set; right now, Rance Sherman was sweating blood at the thought of profits walking away from him.

SNAKE RIVER chuckled and walked into the telegraph office several blocks down the street.

"I want to send a message," he said to the operator, who looked like a young Rance Sherman, and was, in fact, Rance's cousin.

"Sure, sure, just write it down," the operator said, then grinned at the showman. "You're the fellow who runs that medicine show, ain't you? Pretty good little racket you've cooked up for yourself." He looked at the diamond on Snake River's hand. "Doing all right, too, I see."

"Fair to middling," Snake River admitted, then handed his message across the counter.

"Ephraim Titus, Titusville, Pennsylvania," the operator read aloud. *"Ship drilling equipment immediately. Same formation here. Keep quiet. Snake River."*

"Send it now," Snake River said, and spun a gold coin onto the counter. "When an answer comes, have it brought to me at the Tremaine ranch west of town." He smiled. "Keep the change for the extra trouble."

The other grinned. "No trouble," he said, and curiosity shaded his voice. "Seems like *you're* going to the trouble," he finished, "seeing as how we've got some pretty good water-well diggers right here in town."

"Water!" Snake River blinked, then coughed, and his tone gave the lie to his words. "Oh—oh, yes. Well, you see Titus and I are old friends. We're maybe figuring on going into business together." He turned away, his voice drifting back. "Send the message at once, and don't forget to get the answer to me as soon as possible after it arrives."

HE was whistling as he went down the street. He wondered if there was a man named Ephraim Titus in Titusville. Not that it mattered, since the message wouldn't be sent, anyway. The Shermans were shrewd, and Rance Sherman would know the contents of the message before Snake River Jim had traveled the length of the street.

He nodded to himself, stopping at a saloon door. Young Sherman was already in the street, going toward his cousin's office. Snake River grinned, then stepped into the coolness of the saloon. More time must pass, and here was as good a place as any in which to wait.

He had a beer and then a second, watching the chemist's shop half a block down and across the street. Time passed slowly, an hour, and then a second. He was hungry, and yet his vigil must be kept. He had a third beer, while chatting amiably with the bartender, then finished his drink and strolled outside, when he saw Reef Jenkins' errand boy pull his lathered horse up to the rack before the chemist's shop.

He went across and down the street and entered the shop, a bell tingling softly as the door opened and closed.

"—right away, Mr. Jenkins is in a hurry," the errand boy was saying.

"Right away, right away!" the chemist said irritably. "I only got two hands." He glanced at Snake River. "Be right with you, sir."

"Take your time," the old showman said affably, and eyed the bottles and boxes which lined the shelves.

"Well?" the boy demanded.

"All right, one o'clock," the chemist snapped and turned to the showman.

"Something?" he asked. "Oh, you're the fellow called Snake River Jim."

"A little something," Snake River agreed, and brought a small corked bottle from his trouser pocket. "I want an analysis made of this."

"What is it?" The chemist shook the bottle, watching the water and oil trying futilely to mix.

"U-uh!" Snake River lied transparently. "It's a new medicine sent me by a friend. I just want to check on it. After all,"—he laughed self-consciously—"even a medicine-show doctor doesn't want to kill his patients."

"Heh!" The chemist laughed dutifully. "All right, I'll try to have it by tonight."

"Good." Snake River laid a coin on the counter. "This is confidential, of course. After all, we in the drug trade must stick together. I'll pick up the analysis later."

He winked conspiratorially and turned away. The bell tinkled softly as he opened the door. Outside he hurried a bit, pacing swiftly toward the hotel and its dining-room.

Inside, Snake River Jim, sitting at the wide window of the hotel, watched the land-speculator Rance Sherman waddle down the street, and a slow grin came to his face. He saw him enter the chemist's shop and come out again an hour later.

"Hook, line and sinker," he whispered, and then became busy with his stogie and a final cup of coffee.

He didn't look up as Rance Sherman entered the room and appeared mildly surprised when Sherman stopped at his table.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Sherman," he said cordially, and waved a strong hand at the opposite chair. "Just finishing dinner. How about coffee and a piece of pie?"

"By golly, what a coincidence!" Rance Sherman wheezed as he eased into the chair. "Was just fixing to take a ride out to your ranch and talk to you."

"Oh!" Snake River Jim's features went blank of expression, and a sudden wariness crept into his eyes.

"Hmm!" Sherman cleared his throat. "Just got to thinking about your being stuck with that property, and thought maybe I could help you out."

"Help me out!" Snake River shook his head. "Sorry, but I don't need any help." He flicked ashes into the cuspidor. "And I'm not interested in buying any of your land on the other side of town."

Perspiration beaded Sherman's moon face. "No, no, you don't understand," he said earnestly. "You see, I figured on maybe taking that bad land off your hands." He spread his fat hands. "Ranching is plenty tough, without killing yourself on a place like that."

Snake River Jim permitted a small secretive smile to creep onto his face.

"I don't think it will be too tough," he said genially. "Anyway, I'm stubborn; I'll just try to stick it out."

A vein throbbed in Rance Sherman's neck. "Tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'll give you back what you paid for the land." His laugh was a bit forced. "Fact is, being a land-speculator, and seeing as how there is water on the land, I figure I might get rid of it in the next year or so at a slight profit."

"Profit!" Snake River Jim pursed his lips.

"Well,"—Sherman shrugged,—"not much, but a little for my time." He leaned forward. "My real reason, of course, is to help you out of a bad deal. Tulsa can use men like yourself to help its growth. We can't afford to let you be impoverished by a crook like Tremaine."

The old showman cut him short and leaned forward to rap on the window glass.

Outside, the chemist hurrying by stopped, blinked, then nodded in recognition. He waved a small sheet of paper in his right hand, then hurried toward the hotel entrance. Seconds later, he was in the dining-room, walking toward Snake River's table.

"Just starting out to your place, Mr. Snake River," he said. "Did a rush job for you, seeing as how you wanted it so fast."

"Thanks," Snake River said genially, and reached for the paper.

Reading, he caught the quick wink of the chemist's eye toward Rance Sherman. Chuckling inwardly, he permitted slow disappointment to grow on his face.

"You're sure this is correct?" he asked finally, looking up.

"Why, sure," the chemist said. "It's all there, and I don't make mistakes."

"Bad news, Mr. Snake River?" Rance Sherman said smoothly.

The showman forced a laugh. "Not really," he said. "Just some—er—medicine that didn't measure up in quality." He glanced at the chemist. "Thanks for bringing the report so soon."

"Glad to help any time," the man said, turning away.

"To get back to business," Rance Sherman said then, stifling a smirk, "how about selling me the ranch?"

"Eh!" Snake River stared at the report, permitting dejection to creep into his tone. "Oh, the ranch."

"Yes." Greed narrowed Sherman's eyes. "Tell you what I'll do. Seeing



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as how I've got connections back East and might be able to turn the land over in a fast deal, I'll split any probable profit with you. Let's say five thousand; that way, you'll clear a thousand for your trouble."

"Five?" Snake River crumpled the paper and thrust it into a vest pocket. "Why, the water rights alone make the land valuable."

"Well—" Sherman hesitated.

"Six!" Snake River Jim said greedily. "Make it six and it's a deal."

"All right, six thousand," Rance Sherman agreed. "I can give you the money now, if you have the papers here."

Snake River Jim shrugged. "We'll get the banker for a witness."

"No, no!" Rance Sherman said. "Get the lawyer, Thomas; everything perfectly legal."

"All right," Snake River Jim agreed.

"Fine, fine!" Rance Sherman surged to his feet, his smile oily and unctuous, and triumph barely hidden in his eyes.

Side by side, they went toward the door.

THAT evening Snake River Jim's rich laughter boomed in the kitchen of Reef Jenkins' home. Sally Jenkins poured fresh steaming coffee, and her white head shook in mock disapproval as she looked at the piratical old showman.

"I don't know why I approve of you, Snake River," she said in mock wryness. "You sell a mixture of alcohol, water and colored flavors and call it medicine. You cheat at cards, and I know you've been in jail. And now you admit you've stolen two thousand dollars of Rance Sherman's money. You—you're just no good."

"Amen!" said Reef Jenkins.

Snake River Jim beamed at the couple. "That's the way it goes," he said. "But did you ever stop to consider that if there weren't crooks, there couldn't be honest people? You've got to have a contrast. Anyway, he got no more than he deserved. In fact, he got off lucky."

"Heh, heh, heh!" Jenkins laughed. "You should 'a' seen him hypering out of town in his buggy to see the new *oil* land he just bought." He laughed until tears came to his eyes. "Man, what a surprise he's got coming!"

"Well," Sally set the pot aside, "maybe he does deserve some of his own medicine, but—" She turned, at the rap of knuckles on the front door. "Now, who could that be, at this time of night?"

"Easiest way to find out is to take a look," Reef said.

"I suppose." Sally left the kitchen, absently patting at her hair.

Snake River lifted his cup, feeling rested and content. "I ever tell you about that time when they tried to hang me in Montana?" he asked, and Reef Jenkins shook his head.

"Nope. All I heard was something about rustling."

"It's the Sheriff, Reef," Sally called. "Says he wants to talk to Snake River."

"He certainly does, the dirty crook!" That was Rance Sherman's voice, and anger had thinned and lifted its tone. "Go ahead, Sheriff, do your duty."

"Well, come on in," Reef Jenkins bellowed.

Footsteps sounded in the hall; and then Sally came through the door, followed by the Sheriff and Rance Sherman.

"You want to see me, Tom?" Snake River asked mildly, and his gray eyes twinkled at the dislike on Rance Sherman's face.

The Sheriff nodded belligerently, flourishing a folded sheet of paper. "You're danged right, Snake River," he said. "I got to do my duty, and it's gonna be done." He jerked a thumb toward Sherman. "He's swore out a fraud complaint against you, and I'm taking you in."

"That's it; now get done with it!" Sherman said savagely, and swung toward Snake River. "Stick me with worthless land, will you, you damned swindler!"

"*Tch, tch!*" Sally shook her head in disapproval of the swearing; but Reef Jenkins exploded with laughter, and amusement lifted the corners of Snake River Jim's mouth.

"Worthless?" Snake River said. "Why, you told me you could sell at a big profit to somebody back East."

"You dirty crook, you salted that land!" Rance Sherman almost danced in his fury.

"Salted?"

"You know what I mean; I found that empty oil keg hidden in brush! You poured oil onto that water seep, and then you palmed that land off to me as oil land as good as that back in Pennsylvania."

"Oil!" Snake River Jim's eyes were steady. "I said nothing about oil!"

"You—you poured oil on the ground and in the seep, and then you whickered me into paying you six thousand dollars for land not worth a third as much."

"That's the charge, Snake River," the Sheriff said virtuously. "I sure don't want no crooks like you around; the law's the law."

"Is it now?" Snake River murmured, and leaned back casually.

"Come along—or do I use force?" the Sheriff blustered.



"My appeal must 'a' been denied. My lawyer keeps sending me long-playing records!"

"You're a pig-headed ass," Jenkins said abruptly. "Just try using force!"

"Better yet," Snake River said, "let's call in Thomas and see what claims I made about the property."

Rance Sherman swallowed, then blustered on: "You sent a telegraph message back East, telling a man to come here and drill for oil."

"Wait a minute," Jenkins said. "What right do *you* have to read a private message?" Suddenly his laughter was gone. "I think maybe you and your cousin will be up on charges yourself."

Snake River frowned. "And I fail to remember mentioning oil in the message."

Perspiration was wilting Sherman's collar. Suddenly the sureness was oozing from him. His gaze swept to the Sheriff.

"Well, do your duty," he said. "He can't get around the fact that he planted a mixture of crude oil and water with Harry Bellew for an analysis—knowing I'd get a full report."

"I gave a sample, too," Reef Jenkins said thinly. "Fact is, I got a report this afternoon. Bellew's report said nothing about petroleum."

Snake River retrieved the chemist's analysis from his pocket. "Mine mentions no oil." His face was hard now. "Seems to me you and Bellew have some fancy explaining to do."

The Sheriff scowled, perspiration beginning to dot his face. "Look," he said, "I guess maybe there's been some sort of a mistake."

Sherman's laugh was forced and hollow. "Well, now, I—" he began.

"You're damned well right there's been a mistake!" Reef Jenkins said. "I'm thinking the town won't like this, come next election."

The Sheriff swallowed. "Now be reasonable, Mr. Jenkins," he said. "I was only doing my duty. When a man swears out a warrant, I—"

"Shut up!" Jenkins snapped.

"Listen," Rance Sherman said, and now his face was frightened, "you can't twist things around like this. I —I—I—" He stabbed a finger at Snake River. "He cheated me!"

"Cheated *you!*" Reef Jenkins exploded. "I bring in a water sample from the west seep and give it to Bellew. Snake River gives Bellew a sample, too. Meanwhile, your cousin has given you a private message to read. You buy off Bellew and then hotfoot it to Snake River to get his land. And later, when you discover the oil keg, you and this so-called Sheriff try to rig a phony charge against Snake River. Sherman, I'll be the first to get a petition running you and your hired crooks out of Tulsa."

"Let's get out of here, Sherman," the Sheriff said in blind panic.

"How about it, Snake River?" Jenkins asked. "Want to throw a couple of charges their way?"

But Snake River wasn't listening. He was remembering a single word, and coldness crept along his spine. He'd made a mistake, a damnable mistake; there would be hell to pay unless he could find a way out.

"All right," he said to Sherman, "I salted the seep, as you say. But I made no claims."

"Look, look, let's forget it!" Rance Sherman said, backing.

"Forget it!" Snake River Jim said coldly. "Like hell I will!" He frowned. "All right, I'll give you a chance to salvage a part of your money. I'll give you back two thousand, the exact amount you say the land is worth."

Jenkins blew his breath in disgust. "To hell with him, Snake River!" he said hotly. "Let's get this deal into the open; for months folks have been wanting to ride him out of town on a rail."

"Two thousand!" Snake River repeated.

"But that's only a third," Sherman protested.

Snake River chuckled. "So it is," he agreed. "But it figures out just about right. Ben Tremaine has his money back, and I have back the money I paid him. You'll have back the extra two thousand on the deal, the money I figured was my profit. In the end, this entire affair will cost you just that piece of land, and then only what it cost you in the first place."

"Don't be a fool, Snake River," Jenkins snapped. "Let him sweat."

"It's a deal," Sherman said greedily.

"What about me?" the Sheriff broke in.

"Shut up!" Jenkins said. "The voters will get around to you later."

Sherman dug papers from his pockets. "Here's the title and everything; where's the money?"

"You're too soft," Jenkins said in deep disgust. "I'd make this crook whistle up a rain-spout."

Snake River grinned, watching the others sign as witnesses. "I think Mr. Sherman is about due for a trip East, Reef," he said. "This story is going to spread out kind of fast."

He watched signatures being added to the papers, then laid a flat packet of bills on the table.

"There's the two thousand," he said. "Take it and get out." His gray eyes watched the fat speculator for a moment. "I'd kinda hurry about leaving," he finished. "Folks are really going to get a good laugh when they find out you've the same as given away oil land."

Rance Sherman laughed aloud. "Oil land!" he gibed. "You and a keg of Pennsylvania crude oil you sell for liniment!" He straightened. "Maybe when people hear how you salted the seep, *you'll* do a bit of running."

"Maybe," Snake River admitted, then swung to Reef Jenkins. "Where'd you get your sample, Reef?" he asked.

"Like I said, the west seep," Jenkins said, puzzlement in his eyes. "My boy brought it to Bellew and you—"

"Snake River, no!" Sally Jenkins said then, understanding.

"That's right, Sally," Snake River said carefully. "Reef's sample was from the west seep, but I salted the *east* seep, and they're at least half a mile apart."

"Then there *is* oil on—" Rance Sherman said, and his skin was a frog-belly white.

"There sure must be," Snake River said. "And so near the surface it seeps into ground water and springs." He beamed suddenly. "By golly," he finished, "if there's oil on my land, it must be all around there! It looks to me as if those people you cheated are going to find themselves an oil-well or two."

For one ageless moment the tableau held. Sherman's face twitched, and his hands were fat claws. He quivered in blind rage, and his voice was a muted shriek.

"You—*you crook!*"

And then he was gone, almost running; a second later the Sheriff followed, wanting no more of this night. A door slammed so hard that china rattled on the shelf.

"Snake River—" Sally began, and the old showman beamed at her.

"You know what I figure?" he said. "I'll give Reef a fourth of any oil profits, for handling details. I'll keep a quarter for myself just in case I ever get old and want to retire."

"And the other half?" Sally asked, almost knowing what his words would be.

Snake River Jim's gray eyes were suddenly thoughtful. He lit a fresh stogie at the lamp chimney and gently touched the legal papers lying on the table.

"I never had a family," he said. "Getting too old to start one now. About the only thing I can do is adopt one." He smiled gently. "Guess the Tremaines will have to do. Mrs. Tremaine will have to have expensive doctoring, and Ben can use some money to build up that Colorado property. And the children can use some extra schooling." He blew smoke at the ceiling, slightly embarrassed at the nakedness of his emotions. "You know I kinda like the thought."

"Oh, you—you foolish old crook, you!" Sally exclaimed in fierce fondness—and she turned to the stove, dabbing at her eyes. "Now, let's have some coffee." •

You can hunt ANYTIME

Even if the regular shooting season is past, why brood? Get out your guns and go after some of these year-round targets.



AFTER the regular hunting season ends, a good many outdoorsmen sink into easy chairs and stare sorrowfully at their gun-racks. They steep themselves in memories, lethargy, or alcohol, or all three, and long for the day a long way off when the next hunting season will open.

If you are one of these convention-bound hunters, or even a recent graduate of the tin-can plinking school, stop feeling sorry for yourself. *You can hunt right now.* For that matter, you can hunt any time.

You cannot go after deer, to be sure, or depopulate the upland game-bird stock—not unless you want to get tossed into the pokey. But you can go after the "unprotected animals," the birds, mammals, and reptiles on which the law decrees open season twelve months of the year. There are dozens of them, and in a good many cases there are good reasons for shooting them.

Many of the "unprotected" targets are pests or predators. Crows, for instance, cause an enormous amount of crop damage, and raid the nests of other, more mannerly birds. Predatory animals may help keep the rodents in check, but they also kill domestic stock and ground-nesting game birds. And some of them are outright varmints—to-wit, rats. These low-born creatures have multiplied so rapidly that in some cities the rat population outnumbers the humans. Vicious-tempered, they are a serious health menace, and anyone who hunts them deserves a civic medal.

Oil up your rifle or shotgun, and take a look at the chart on the next three pages. These twelve animals were selected because they are widespread, because they are year-round targets in many or most States, or because they richly deserve to be liquidated. Some are animals for the relatively inexperienced amateur; some are big fur-bearing animals which challenge the skill and stamina of the most expert hunter. Some are shotgun prey; others are rifle targets.

The list by no means includes everything you can hunt the year round. Some animals were left off the chart because they are found only in restricted areas, or very infrequently. Snakes, not on the chart, are found everywhere and are fair targets at any time. (Poisonous snakes of the United States, in case anyone wants to go after them, are the Rattlesnake, Copperhead, Coral Snake and Cottonmouth.)

Space did not permit us to include Skunks, Weasels, Prairie Dogs, and a number of others. Check with your area game warden to learn which animals, not included in the chart, you may hunt in your State.

Check too to see what special restrictions your State may have. Massachusetts, for instance, does not permit hunting on Sunday; in North Dakota shotguns may not be carried afield from July 1 until opening day of the regular season.

One note on equipment: The Varminter rifle referred to in the chart is a small-bore (.22 to .25), high-velocity weapon. It will flatten animals that a standard .22 will only wound, but still has the advantage of using inexpensive ammunition.

TARGETS FOR YEAR-ROUND SHOOTING

WOODCHUCK



Found in almost all parts of the United States, the Woodchuck (Groundhog) is an ideal target for the year-round hunter. Best hunted in colonies, which can be located by talking with farmers, they frequent clover fields on high, dry ground.

Most States have open season all year but some States, most of them in the West, do not mention Woodchuck in their laws. This is sometimes true of other animals in this chart, either because the animal is not common in those States, or because States have incomplete game code. In either case, if animal is not listed as "game" it is safe to assume animal is not protected by law and is a fair target at anytime.

(Note: Some States prohibit any hunting in specific areas at certain times, without regard to type of game. Such restrictions must be observed whether game laws mention animal or not.)

Six States list restrictions on Woodchuck. PENNSYLVANIA, NEW JERSEY, WEST VIRGINIA, and WISCONSIN have specified open and closed seasons. MICHIGAN has open and closed season in some areas. MISSOURI *prohibits* Woodchuck hunting during open season on Quail.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Varminter rifle with scope. Woodchuck must be stalked, so scope is almost essential.

SQUIRRELS



Most States class all varieties of squirrel as "game," and have both open and closed seasons. However, some States list only certain varieties as game, and permit year-round hunting of other kinds. For instance, none of the New England States protects the Red Squirrel, though all States in that area declare the Gray Squirrel "game."

Several States—MONTANA, UTAH, and NORTH DAKOTA—do not list any variety as "game."

If your State is not covered above, check with Game Warden or State Conservation Department to find out which squirrels are protected, which are not.

Also, before hunting squirrel (or other animal hunted with a rifle), check authorities to see if there are any State or local restrictions on rifle-shooting outside of regular hunting season.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Standard .22 rifle.

HAWKS



The three best targets are the Goshawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Cooper's Hawk. All predators that kill game birds and small mammals, all three are found in most of the United States. All are fair targets any time, anywhere, except that in MINNESOTA non-residents are not allowed to hunt Cooper's Hawk or Sharp-shinned Hawk.

GOSHAWK—Larger than crow; long-tailed; short-winged.
SHARP-SHINNED—Small; short, rounded wings; long, square tail.
COOPER'S—Much like Sharp-shinned, but tail is rounded.

Check game warden for other hawks you can hunt in your area. Learn complete identification markings.

(Note: "Chicken Hawk" is meaningless term. Many different hawks have been given that name, and some so-called Chicken Hawks are beneficial to farmers and are protected.)

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Shotgun.

TARGETS FOR YEAR-ROUND SHOOTING

RABBITS



Most rabbits are classed as "game" and may be hunted only during the regular hunting season. However, Jackrabbits are fair targets the year round, and are found almost everywhere west of the Mississippi River, with concentration in the Far West. Predominant varieties are White-tailed and Black-tailed.

These restrictions apply: MISSOURI prohibits hunting Jackrabbit during open season on Quail. In SOUTH DAKOTA nonresidents may not hunt Jackrabbit. Some States have bag limit.

Snowshoe Hare, though protected as "game," may be hunted for longer-than-normal season in some States. They are found in various Northern States from Maine to Washington, and in Virginia.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Shotgun or small-caliber rifle.

CROW



Found in every State and concentrated in the Midwest Corn Belt (where a single roost may number 10,000 to 100,000 birds), these much-despised birds destroy crops, fruit, and bird eggs.

Except in MINNESOTA, where nonresidents may not hunt Crow, they are a fair target any time, anywhere, to any hunter. Best shooting is from blind in roost or feeding location. Crow calls and decoys (dummy hawk or owl) help.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Shotgun.

COUGAR



Found in most Western States and in Florida, Cougar (Mountain Lion, Puma) are fair game whenever you get your sights on one —which won't be often. They usually give humans a wide berth (though a mature Cougar could easily kill an unarmed man), must be tracked with dogs, and are a real challenge to even the most skilled hunter.

Deer are their favorite food, though they also prey on domestic stock and small mammals. Some States offer a bounty.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: High-powered rifle (.30-.30).

FOXES



Found in all parts of the U. S. and considered predators by almost all States, both the Red and the Gray Fox usually are fair game any time. If not quite as clever as they are reputed to be, they still are a good match for a skilled hunter. Best hunted by tracking with dogs. Some States offer bounty; few give protection.

Of the two the Red Fox is more often found around farms, but both will kill chickens as well as wild animals.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Varminter rifle.

WOLF



Found in the West, in some Central States (MICHIGAN, MINNESOTA, and WISCONSIN), and in some Southern States MISSISSIPPI, LOUISIANA, and possibly ARKANSAS) wolves are another target for the expert. They are rarely concentrated, and attempts to wipe them out have made the survivors very wary. They are fair game any time you can track them down (best done with dogs), and some States offer bounty.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: .30-.30 rifle.

TARGETS FOR YEAR-ROUND SHOOTING

RATS



Shooting rats comes under the "Public Service" heading. Found in barnyards, and by the thousands in garbage dumps, rats are a serious health hazard. Ill-tempered but courageous, these disease-carrying varmints will attack a man and have been known to seriously injure (even kill) children.

Hunt them at any time, in any State, with only this restriction: Some communities have laws forbidding shooting within city or town limits. Most garbage dumps are within these limits, so be sure to check local authorities before hunting.

Best hunted at night, with one man handling rifle, another to handle flashlight. Wear boots.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Std. .22 or Varminter rifle.

GREAT HORNED OWL



Widely distributed, Great Horned Owls are fair game at all times. They favor woodland, make kills at night, and have dubious distinction of being only owls that do more harm than good. They feed on game birds, eggs, chickens, and small mammals, and will even cart off a young fox. Best hunted by locating nests or hangouts, going after them in daylight.

(Note: MINNESOTA does not allow nonresidents to hunt them.)

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Shotgun.

BOBCAT



Spread throughout the U. S., Bobcat (Wildcat) are wary, like cover of heavy woods, and must be tracked with dogs. Game- and stock-killers, they are targets for expert hunters. Some States offer bounty.

Thirty-eight States list "No closed season." (The ten States that *do not* specify year-long season are ARIZONA, COLORADO, DELAWARE, INDIANA, IOWA, KANSAS, KENTUCKY, MARYLAND, OHIO, WYOMING.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: .30-.30 rifle.

COYOTE



Coyotes often are considered an animal found only in the Far West. They still are concentrated there, but have spread across a wide range. They now are found as far east as New England. A nuisance everywhere, they prey on small game and farm animals. They are fair game the year round almost everywhere, but some States have bag limit.

Best hunted by tracking with dogs. Some States offer bounty.

RECOMMENDED WEAPON: Varminter rifle.

NOTE: *Check fish and game authorities or game wardens to find out if license is required in your State. Some States require license to hunt anything. Other States require one for nonresidents who hunt unprotected animals, but do not require license for residents. Still other States do not permit nonresidents to hunt certain animals. Game laws often change; be sure information you have is up to date.*

NOTE: *No matter what State or local laws say, you must have permission from property-owner before hunting on private land. Most farmers are happy to have you help them clean out predators and pests, but want to know about it first. They may have stock in certain areas and will want you to stay clear of those pastures. Abide by any restrictions owner sets, for your own protection and for the sake of other hunters. The reason so much land has been closed to hunters is that hunters have misused privileges or have failed to obtain permission.*

The Hostages



We shouldn't have stopped, but I would have picked up almost anyone in that storm—anyone except a killer.

• By JON CLEARY

WE WERE ON U. S. 40, heading east from Battle Mountain toward Winnemucca, and the Nevada mountains were just vague shapes in the screen of rain, when we saw the man by the roadside.

"You're not going to pick him up, are you?" Connie said, as I began to slow the car. "All the way across the country we've passed them by. You've read the stories about what some hitch-hikers have done to the people who've picked them up."

"I know, darling." The man was just a blur now through the rain falling in fat drops against the windscreen. "But we can't leave the poor blighter out in *this!* How would *you* like to be way out here in the middle of nowhere, caught in rain like this?"

"I'd see that the circumstance didn't arise," Connie said.

I grinned at her. "Old Mum Efficiency."



"What are we stopping for, Daddy?" the kids asked. They are good kids. Ginny is five and Patsy four, and life is one big question-mark to them.

The man came running through the rain toward us. Connie wound down her window as I leaned across her and said, "Come in. Don't bother to wipe your feet."

"My husband is a natural-born comic," Connie said with true wifely respect, and slid closer to me as the man opened the door. "He'll not only give you a lift, but keep you entertained besides."

The man stood holding the door open. He stared at the children, an uncertain look on his face, and for a moment I thought he was going to decline our offer of a lift. He was a man of just above middle height, with a bony face, dark eyes and close-cropped, prematurely gray hair, and he wore a tan topcoat that was now dark with moisture from the heavily falling rain. I was about to tell him to hurry and make up his mind, when he got in beside Connie and slammed the door after him. Then I saw the gun.

"So long as you just make jokes, Mac, we'll get along fine," he said in an expressionless voice. "Okay, let's get moving again."

I COULD feel Connie's elbow digging into my side; her whole body seemed to have become stiff and thin as a bone. Ginny leaned on the back of the seat. "What's the man got, Daddy?" she whispered.

"Just mind your business for a while, Ginny." My voice was harsh. The man's eyes flicked toward her, and I was scared into belligerence. "Look here, the kids—"

He cut me off. "You don't have to worry about 'em, Mac. I like kids. And so long as you behave yourself, I'm not gonna hurt you or your wife. Just let's get going, that's all."

We drove onward in silence for a few miles, passing no other cars and with the mountains lost somewhere in the heavy spring rain. We passed a sign *Winnemucca, 30 miles;* and I wondered what was going to happen before we reached there.

"You folks British?" the man said.

"Australian," Connie answered. She was still sitting close against me, her elbow still pressed into my side, and the children were leaning on the seat behind her. Their eyes never left the man and his gun.

"You're a long way from home," he said.

I looked at the gun. "I wish we weren't."

He smiled, the smile beginning stiffly but then coming naturally to alter the whole set of his face, and after a moment Connie managed a smile in reply. "You see? Never lost for a joke."

"Does he joke for a living?" he said.

"No, thank heaven!" said Connie, and I could feel a little of the tenseness going out of her; she was evidently beginning to fear this man a little less than I did. "We'd starve. No, he's an Australian Government official. We've been in New York for three years and now we're on our way home. We plan to sell the car in San Francisco and catch a plane from there the fourteenth of this month."

"Looking forward to going home?" the man said.

Connie glanced down at the gun and I felt her elbow come into my ribs again. "Yes," she said, and she wasn't joking.

We passed a couple of cars, rushing at us out of the grayness and swishing by as if afraid of being hailed; then suddenly the rain began to thin and in a moment we had driven out of it. The mountains were crouched under the wrack of clouds, their tops streaked with snow and their sides shining like the wet coats of animals, and the road stretched away like a glistening dark ribbon. We came up over a rise and the man abruptly leaned forward.

"Pull up. Pull up, you hear!" His voice was harsh and commanding, and I jammed on the brakes. About a mile ahead of us, four cars had just come around a bluff that loomed close to the road. They came to a stop; a man got out of the leading car and ran back to the second car, conferred there a moment, then ran back to his own car. The four cars then turned, went slowly back along the road and disappeared behind the bluff.

"A roadblock," said the man with the gun, more to himself than to us; then he motioned with the gun. "Swing her around, Mac. We're going the other way."

I turned the car while Patsy asked the inevitable question: "What we going this way for, Daddy?"

The man answered her. "It's all right, honey. We're just trying to dodge Dick Tracy. You know him, in the funnies?"

Patsy looked at him, her big eyes unblinking, but made no reply. Both she and Ginny take a long time to break down with strangers. The man smiled at her and winked.

"I recognize this spot now," he said to me. "There ought to be a road back about a couple miles on the right. We'll take that."

In a few minutes we came to the road, a muddy strip that looked as if it hadn't been traveled in months. It went off at right angles to the main highway and disappeared into the mountains.

"We're likely to get stuck if we take this," I said. "Up there in those hills, the road's probably under several feet of snow."

"We'll risk that." He raised the gun a little. "Don't start arguing!"

There was no smile on his face now; it was as hard and cold as the gun in his hand. I turned the car off the road and silently drove up toward the mountains.

THE man leaned over and switched on the radio. We had music for a few minutes, and suddenly everything seemed laughably unreal. This couldn't be happening to *us.* It was happening in a farce comedy, and we were answering the man with the gun in such normal tones only because the play would soon be over. A commercial came on to tell us our liver troubles were over. Then someone named Johnny Ray wept to show us his plight was far worse than ours. He was carried away exhausted, and the over-dramatic voice of a newscaster filled the car.

Then chilling reality struck me, and for the first time I felt real terror, as I heard:



Illustrated by STAN DRAKE

"John Mazon, triple-murderer who escaped two days ago from the penitentiary at Carson City, is still at large! Mazon, who was serving a life term for the murder of his wife and two children in 1947, has not been sighted since he overpowered a guard and broke out Tuesday night in one of the most daring escapes in the prison's history. Police are warning that—"

The man snapped off the radio. The play that wasn't a play went on, and I heard myself saying, "And you say you like kids?"

Abruptly, his face softened and he looked away. "I loved my kids, Mac. I loved my wife, too."

There were other questions on the end of my tongue, but they didn't come out. We climbed higher, the main highway now gone from view behind us, and passed scattered drifts of snow lying like discarded blankets in broken beds of gray rock. Above us the clouds had begun to flow, ripping themselves out of shape on the the mountaintops and whirling away with ragged ends across the morose sky. A wind moaned round the car, and a bird, caught in it, hurtled past us like a thrown stone. We came to a fork in the road.

"Hold it." Mazon looked about him, and for the first time since he had got into the car he looked uncertain. Then round a bend in the road above us came a small herd of sheep followed by a dog and a moment later by a man on a horse. The sheep straggled past, while the children leaned forward excitedly, asking questions but getting no answers. Then the sheepherder was level with us.

"Lost, mister?" He was a small dark man with a pronounced accent.

He had spoken to me and I was aware of Mazon reaching behind Connie and putting the gun against my ribs. "Sort of," I said.

"We're looking for the old Meteor Mine," said Mazon.

"Ain't nobody there now." The herder's face had the set, almost blank expression of the man who lives in loneliness; he showed no surprise that we should be so far off the main highway in this sort of weather. "Been closed for years."

"Yeah, we know," Mazon said impatiently. "We just wanted to look it over. Which road do we take?"

The herder jerked a thumb, his face still expressionless. "That one. But you sure picked a funny time, mister. Summer's the time to come visiting in these parts."

"Some people can't choose their time," Mazon said, and dug me in the side with the gun. "Let's go, Steve. We ain't got long before dark."

The herder moved his horse on down the road, not even bothering to look back at us as we went up around the bend, and in a moment he and the sheep were gone.

"One of the local Basque," Mazon said. "They do all the sheepherding around here."

"You aren't afraid he'll tell the police he's seen us?" I said. "I'm surprised you didn't invite him to join us."

"Another of your jokes, eh?" I was surprised at the good humor in his voice; it was impossible to keep up with the changes in his mood. "No, Mac, we'll be out o' here before he goes down to town. These guys stay out here in the hills three-four weeks at a time. They're all Basques from the old country, guys who keep their mouths shut. The young 'uns, the ones born here, who might talk to a cop, you don't meet 'em out here. They don't like a herder's life. Too damn lonely for 'em."



Mazon reached behind Connie and dug the gun in my ribs to keep me quiet. "We're looking for the old Meteor Mine," he told the sheepherder. "Which road do we take?" The herder jerked a thumb. "That one. But you sure picked a funny time to visit in these parts."

"You seem to know your way in this part of the country," I said.

"I worked around here for a couple years." He looked straight ahead, as if trying to remember something he hadn't thought about in a long time. "Before I was married."

Then we had come round a bend in the road and the rusted, dilapidated workings of a small mine lay ahead of us. I drew the car up before a small shack that looked less of a wreck than the half-dozen others that surrounded it. I switched off the ignition and looked across at Mazon.

He opened his door and stepped out. "Okay, this is it, for the time being. Just behave yourselves and everything will be all right."

We got out. The kids took hold of Connie's skirt and stood close to her, staring in silence at Mazon.

"I told you, you got nothing to worry about if you just behave yourselves," he said. "Relax a little. You're getting on my nerves, looking all the time like I'm gonna kill you."

"What do you want with us, anyway?" I said. "Why did you bring us up here?"

"I need your car. It just seems safer to me if I have you people with me. Sort of hostages—is that what you call it?" Then he looked at Connie. "You got any food in the car?"

"We have one of those portable iceboxes. There's enough for a couple of meals, I think. But it's just cold cuts, stuff like that."

"Any coffee?" Mazon said.

"No," she answered. "Just a quart of milk for the children, and four cans of beer."

"The milk will be for the kiddies," Mazon said. "Maybe your husband would like a beer to steady his nerves." He looked at me and half-smiled. "I-dunno if beer is good enough, Mac. You ought 'a' brought whisky."

"I SHOULDN'T have come at all," I said, and somehow managed a weak grin. I don't think I'm any more cowardly than the next man; I went through five and a half years of war, scared all the time, but I never turned and ran. But war was a way of life in which the unexpected was always expected. This was different. I looked at Connie and the girls, a trinity of fear, and felt a weakness run through me such as I'd never had during the war.

Mazon had stepped back a few paces, still pointing the gun at us, but looking about him. "We'll eat now, Mrs.— What's your name?"

"Mrs. Bellamy," Connie answered. "Come on, Ginny, Patsy. You can help me get supper."

Connie made sandwiches. Mazon was obviously very hungry, but he ate only two sandwiches, and I realized that we were perhaps going to have more than one meal in this deserted spot. The children drank all the milk, Connie had a tumbler of water from a spring we found behind one of the sheds, and Mazon and I drank beer.

The sky had cleared abruptly, but the darkness of night was coming in now to replace the grayness of the clouds that had gone. A few stars had appeared, delicate as ice splinters, and the mountains were beginning to lose their shape in the blue dusk. The rain-washed air was sharp with the smell of sage. It was remarkably still up there, so still there seemed to be only silence, yet every now and then we became aware of the singing of water over rocks, the movement of some invisible animal, the lonesome cry of a bird and, far below us somewhere, the bleat of sheep.

"I'm still hungry, Mummy," Patsy said.

"No more, darling," Connie said. She looked at Mazon. "Unless you'll let me give her another sandwich?"

He shook his head and smiled at Patsy. "Sorry, honey. Maybe in the morning."

Ginny, with sudden maturity, shook Patsy's arm. "Be quiet, Patsy. The man doesn't want you to have any more tonight."

"Who is he?" Patsy asked me. "Daddy, I don't like him."

"Don't be offended," I said to Mazon. "She's just used to speaking her mind, like any child."

He grinned and stood up. "That's okay. I know; my kids were the same."

He motioned with the gun and the smile faded. "Come on. You're all spending the night in this shed."

We got to our feet and Connie herded the children ahead of her into the shed. It was dark inside, and she looked back over her shoulder at me. "The torch is in the car."

"May I get it?" I said to Mazon. "The torch—flashlight, as you call it. It's in the glove-box."

"I'll get it," he said; "stay where you are." He backed toward the car, opened the door, and a moment later came back with the light and a rug. "This'll keep the kids warm."

"What about us?" I said. "May we get our overcoats?"

"No!" The gun wavered in his hand and I thought it was about to go off; instinctively I stepped closer to Connie and the children. "You ought to thought about that before. Get into the shed!"

We turned and went quickly into the shed. Mazon angrily slammed the door behind us. It creaked and screeched on its rusty hinges, but once it was shut it looked fairly secure.

I swept the light about the interior of the shed. A rusty, broken cot filled one corner; two chairs sprawled on their backs, each minus a leg; a table had collapsed under the weight of a pile of dust-covered magazines and papers that now littered the floor.

Connie sank down on the floor. For a moment I thought she had fainted, but then I saw her drawing the girls toward her. "Come on, kids. Try and get some sleep."

WE slept only fitfully. The hard floor, the mice scampering in the darkness and above all the fear of tomorrow—all made the night just a long torture. I was glad to see the sky at last begin to pale beyond the broken windowpane.

An hour later Mazon opened the door. "Sleep well?"

"For the price, best accommodation we've had since leaving New York." I stood up, and the two girls stirred and woke as Connie sat up. It was hard to tell whether Mazon had slept; his thin face seemed to have reached the point where no more strain or tiredness could show. The girls, once they had opened their eyes, were immediately wide awake. They jumped to their feet and Patsy said, "I'm hungry."

Connie got stiffly to her feet, taking hold of my hand to pull herself up. Her blonde hair had come loose and hung about her face; there was a large smudge of dirt on her cheek, her suit was rumpled and there was a long run in her stocking; she looked terrible, and I loved her more than ever.

She looked at Mazon. "Do we eat this morning or do you want to save the food?"

Mazon stepped outside the shed and gestured to us to follow him. Sometimes the gun seemed just another part of his hand, used instead of his voice, no more lethal than a dumb man's fingers. We moved out into a beautiful mountain morning. The sky was a high pale blue, immaculate but for the lone eagle that floated as a small dark cross in its vastness, and the air was tinged with the cold of the snow on the peaks above us. The children shivered and Connie began to wrap the rug about them.

"You and your husband ain't gonna eat this morning, ma'am," Mazon said. "There's just enough for me and the kids."

"Thank you for thinking of the children," Connie said, and I couldn't tell whether she was being grateful or sarcastic.

She walked past Mazon toward the car, ignoring him, and the gun in his hand came up quickly. She stopped. "Be careful with that gun. If you're going to shoot me, don't do it in front

of the children. But you're worrying yourself unnecessarily. I'm not going to attempt anything, Mr. Mazon. You want me to get breakfast, don't you?"

Mazon lowered the gun and turned to me. "You got a good wife there, Mac."

Strangely, a man becomes so accustomed to his wife that he often takes her qualities for granted. Now, as I looked at Connie, it suddenly occurred to me that she was a very brave woman.

Mazon looked down at the girls. "How's it this morning, honeys? You gonna have breakfast with me?"

Ginny didn't answer, but Mazon had mentioned a subject dear to Patsy's heart. "I want cereal and 'nahnas."

Mazon looked up at me, "'Nahnas?"

"Bananas," I said. "She uses the broad A. She also says cahn't instead of can't."

"Sounds just like an American kid, but for that."

"Except that she doesn't talk back to her mother and father quite so much."

He grinned, the strain suddenly melting from his face. "I know, Mac. Kids the last ten years or so have had too much to say. When I was a kid, we knew our place." He sat down on a rock and I sat on another opposite him. Ginny and Patsy came and stood beside me, snuggling closely to me. "I tried to teach my own kids to have respect for me and the wife. I think they did, too. Everybody liked 'em. They were swell kids."

"Boys or girls?"

"Boy and girl. They were twins. They were nine years old when—" He broke off and stared at the ground, the gun hanging carelessly between his knees. His shoulders slumped in a curve. He looked like a man who had seen the complete end of everything. I watched him, the girls standing quietly by my knees. As he sat there in silence my right hand, as if of its own volition, came in contact with a large stone on the ground beside me. My fingers closed on it and even before I lifted it, I knew it would be heavy and effective. I drew it up slowly, my arm paining with the effort to control the throw in the moment to come.

Then Mazon looked up and said, "Just lift it one inch more, Mac, and I'll put a bullet through one of your kids."

There was nothing of the look of a beaten man about him now, and the gun, aimed straight at Ginny, had never been more threatening. I dropped the stone and drew the children closer to me.

"Get this, Mac," Mazon said. "I ain't going back to Carson City. Not alive, anyway. I like you folks, but not you nor nobody else is gonna put me back there. I had five years there, and I swear I'll never have another day. You understand?" The hand holding the gun was shaking; the muscles of his face quivered as if there were something alive under the skin. "You nor nobody else, understand?"

I nodded, clutching the children to me, as much for comfort to myself as to protect them, and Mazon stared at me for a full minute. Then abruptly he looked over toward Connie, preparing sandwiches at the rear of the car, and after a moment the threat went out of his face. He looked back at me.

"You ever had any trouble in your married life?"

"You mean between Connie and me?" I shook my head, glad that the relationship was once more on a conversational basis; the gun was now pointed negligently at the ground. "We've had our spats, like everyone else, but nothing serious. We're that old-fashioned combination, a happily married couple."

"So were we," Mazon said, and again was silent for a while. Connie came back with three sandwiches and stood with them in her hand, but Mazon didn't seem to notice her. "Then I went away to the war—and that was the end of it. After I came back I found she'd been going with another guy. Nothing was the same after that. She had even got the kids to turn against me. Then one day



I lifted my arm slowly, my arm paining with the effort to control the throw. Then Mazon looked up. "Just lift it one more inch, Mac, and I'll put a bullet through one of your kids."

she said she was leaving me, taking the kids with her, and going away with this guy. I never knew who he was, never even saw him. We lived in Reno; I was a dealer at one of the clubs. Only twenty-five thousand people there, and I couldn't find out who he was. He might've been from out of town, I dunno. I oughta found him. Maybe if I had, I'd've killed him instead."

I SAID nothing, still holding the children close to me, and Connie stood with the sandwiches in her hand, looking as if she had forgotten why she had prepared them.

"I shot the three of them, then turned the gun on myself. I didn't have the guts to pull the trigger."

"What happened then?" Connie said after a long pause.

Mazon looked up at her, then back at the gun in his hand. "First they sentenced me to death. Then they commuted it to life, said I deserved mercy. Mercy! I've had five years of it. Then I got out. I got out and I ain't going back!"

He stood up, his body rigid and his eyes pained, frightened, yet threatening at the same time—and a voice down the road said, "Drop your gun, Mazon! You're covered!"

I turned quickly and so did Connie, but Mazon moved faster than either of us. He was behind Connie, the gun in her back and his arm about her waist, when he shouted, "One shot from you guys and she dies!"

I yelled, "Don't shoot!" My voice was loud and full of fear.

"That's right, Mac, tell 'em to be sensible." Mazon didn't look at me, but continued to stare over Connie's shoulder toward the spot from which the voice had come. The road ran straight down from the mine, the only way out of the steeply walled reentrant in which we were, and just over a hundred yards away turned abruptly to the right around a tumble of large smooth boulders. Beyond there the mountain fell away and in the distance we could see the floor of the valley and another range of mountains. The look on Mazon's face told me he knew he was trapped.

"Okay," he said, "let's back up a bit. Bring the kids, Mac. You stay in front of me, ma'am. I ain't gonna hurt you unless your friends start shooting."

Connie said nothing, but began to walk slowly backward, the gun still in her back. Mazon stayed behind her. I took the children's hands and followed. Then the voice down the road shouted again: "Give up, Mazon! You haven't got a chance!"

Mazon didn't answer. We were behind the car now. He opened the rear door and motioned us in. Connie and I each took one of the girls, and slid into the seat. Mazon wound down the window, then slammed the door. "We're gonna be here for a while, I think."

It was easier to talk than to keep quiet. "Looks like you were wrong about the Basque. He must have told the police he'd seen us."

"Maybe." He gestured with the gun; I had come to understand it as clearly as the spoken word. I wound down the other window, so that now he had an uninterrupted view of the road. "But this ain't gonna end the way they think it is."

Connie was holding Patsy close in her arms, cuddling her as she would a baby. "What chance have you got? They'll kill you eventually if you don't give yourself up. Even killing—" She faltered for a moment and I reached out and took her hand. "Killing us won't guarantee that you'll win," she continued. "Do you really want to die, Mr. Mazon?"

He looked at her and in his eyes were all the pain and misery a man could bear. Suddenly I felt sorry for him, wanted to help him, but it was too late, five years too late. "I wanted to die, a long time ago, Mrs. Bellamy," he said slowly.

There was nothing more to say. Connie settled back in the seat and I put my arm about her. Ginny sat in my lap, trembling, aware for the first time of real danger. I looked at Patsy and saw the same fear in her face. Occasionally there was a shout from down the road, repeating the demand for Mazon to give up, but he gave them no answer.

MAZON suddenly opened the door. "Come on, Mac, get out. Just you. The wife and kids stay there."

I stepped out slowly. "What happens now?"

"You're going down the road," Mazon said. "You're gonna tell those guys I'm coming out in five minutes in the car with your wife and kids, and if they don't let me through—" He stopped, looked at Connie, then looked back at me. "You better say good-by, just in case."

"You can't do that, Mazon!" My voice echoed back from the rock walls about us. "Leave them here. Take me! I'll go, but leave them out of this!"

There was an honest note of sadness in his voice when he answered. "I wish I could, Mac. But it's no go. If I took you, they'd take a chance and have a crack at me. But they won't try it if I've got a woman and kids in the car. I'm sorry, Mac, but it has to be this way. I ain't going back to Carson City."

Strangely, I felt all the fear for my own life draining out of me. My voice was hard and cold, and full of hate. "I could kill you, Mazon!"

"I know." There was no expression on his face; the gun was steady in his hand. "Only thing is, I hold all the cards."

I turned to Connie. She leaned forward in the seat of the car, holding the two girls toward me, and there was no fear in her eyes, just tears. I tried to say good-by, but only my hands could speak and I ran them gently over the girls' faces. Then I stepped back and looked at Mazon again.

"All right," I said. "If you get through, promise me you won't harm them."

"I can't promise nothing. It depends on your friends down the road." He stepped over to the ice box and picked out a can of beer and the can-opener with his left hand; he held them out toward me. "I feel like a drink. Open the can, Mac."

I took the can and plunged the opener into the top. The beer foamed out. Again I drove the opener in savagely. Then I looked up and saw that he had turned his face away to say something to Connie.

"Here," I said. As he turned back I threw the can and dived at him. The spouting beer can hit him in the face and he staggered back. I lunged at him with the opener. The gun went off, and I heard Connie scream as I drove in again with the sharp end of the opener. He went down, falling away from me, and the gun fell at my feet. I grabbed it and, kneeling—hearing through my panting breath the screaming of my children and the terrible cry of my wife—shot Mazon twice as he came plunging back toward me.

He put his hands to his stomach and went reeling past me. He tried to stand straight but his legs buckled and he fell in a pain-twisted heap. I waited for him to move, but he would never move again. He lay there with his face buried in the dust, and it came home to me that he must almost have welcomed the bullets.

THEN there was the sound of running feet and three troopers came scrambling round the car. They stopped, their guns still held ready. One of them turned Mazon over. He looked at the dark, dead face, all the strain gone from it now; then he looked at me.

"This guy was a three-time murderer, mister," he said. "You deserve a medal."

I was holding Connie and Ginny and Patsy, all of us part of the one strength and the one weakness. "I didn't want to lose my wife and kids," I said, and I knew the three troopers would never know the irony of it. •

A BLUEBOOK NOVELETTE by JOHN RHODES STURDY

Pride of Cloth



That was all he had left, his pride and his honesty. He had neglected them once. Now they were worth more than his life.

As night came, the blackened hull of the ship began to fade into a covering of mist and darkness, and only the smell of smoke lingered over the village to tell of the burned vessel, now well over on her side and beached high on the outer spit.

In Murphy's trading-store, in the community hall and in several of the houses, lights

Illustrated by FRANK LACANO

glimmered on the pale faces of the survivors, huddled together in groups, some of them still wrapped in blankets, some sipping coffee and others—the shocked, inarticulate ones—merely staring into space with blank eyes.

There were also the bodies in the wharf shed, where a single light-bulb served for illumination. Nine bodies, but there were more aboard the ship or in the sea, for a tally showed a number of persons still missing, including members of the crew.

And there were the burned and injured ones in the community hall and in houses around the village which fishermen's wives had opened quickly to receive them.

DAVY FULTON came out of one of these houses and stood on the slanting main street of the village, at the upper end, looking out into the gloom of the bay toward the ship that was now almost indistinguishable.

He was in his shirt-sleeves; the cloth clung to his upper arms and his chest, and his black hair was as wet as though it had been doused with water. Now the night air chilled the perspiration and made him shiver, and he put on the jacket he carried loosely by one hand. To do this he set down his physician's bag.

He could see figures moving in the main part of the village and around the wharf. No one would sleep in the village tonight, he thought, and perhaps nowhere on the island. The disaster of this afternoon had been more terrible than anything that even these people, born to the sea, had ever experienced.

A large man came lumbering up the hill toward him and said, "I've been looking for you, Doctor." Davy recognized Jenkins, from the wireless station on the bluff across town, and waited, almost too exhausted even to nod his head.

"A Coast Guard cutter's on her way," Jenkins said. "And there's a Norwegian freighter ordered off her course for Halifax and told to put in here. I figure she's about nine hours out. That's the situation at present, Doctor."

Now Davy nodded. He buttoned his jacket.

"I've got some rum at home," Jenkins suggested tentatively.

"Thanks," Davy said, surprised and grateful. "I may take you up on that. I'm going to walk around a bit, first."

Jenkins looked toward the sea. "Her owners have been after me, of course," he said. "Cruise Liners Limited, they call themselves. That's one I never heard of, but I know the ship. She used to belong to the Gray Star Line, of Boston. She was built in 1925 for the Yarmouth run."

"Old," Davy said.

"Well, not young. She did some war service, and that was the last I heard of her until she turned up outside there today, afire. God, I wish we'd saved the skipper! He beached her fine."

Yes, thought Davy, he did that; he beached her fine. Blazing from stem to stern, with men and women jumping through the smoke into the sea, looking like black ants and white ants, too terrified to wait for the boats that had gone out from the village and the tough, rugged fishermen who knew what to do—who had saved all they could.

"I hope I see you later, Doctor," Jenkins said, and Davy gave him a little salute and started down the hill toward the main part of the village.

The tension was wearing off a little, leaving him weak. He thought of the survivors—the brave ones, and the others who had turned hysterical and clutched at his arm, including the steward he had knocked down with a blow he still remembered when he touched the knuckles of his right hand. The ship's steward had made him sick, and now, when the man's face clarified in his mind again for a moment, the nausea returned.

And he remembered the big man, the well-dressed one with the yellow scarf, loudly cursing the ship's officers. "Where were the damned officers?" the man had kept repeating, his voice shrill and hoarse.

Well, one of them—a fair-haired boy who had stood on deck almost to the last, shepherding the passengers over the side into the boats—was one of the bodies in the wharf shed; the ship's doctor was another one.

He wondered if his uncle, Doctor Gordon, was listening to the radio tonight. "You come out to the island, Davy," his uncle had invited, "and relieve me for a month. I haven't been away from the island in three years and I need a change. So do you. You need a touch of solid country practice before you become Boston's leading gynecologist. And you'll get fresh air and a rest."

Until now he had believed his uncle about the fresh air and the rest. The taciturn fisher people of the island had acted as though they would rather die than call on the young physician who had substituted for old Doctor Gordon, even though they knew the man was his nephew. Until today the fresh air had been almost his sole companion.

Remembering that, he was suddenly struck by the thought that, just a couple of moments ago, Jim Jenkins from the wireless station had offered him a drink.

"Doctor—" said a voice.

He was passing one of the small houses on the hill. The cottages flanked the roadway, bunched close together, all looking somewhat alike, all painted white, with tiny vegetable gardens in the rear, eked out of soil that was rocky and almost barren. The houses looked picturesque from the bay, but close up they were almost squalid.

In the dim light he saw a girl standing in front of one of the doorways. For an instant he took her to be one of the villagers, but he noticed her clothes—a man's topcoat, open at the front, a wrinkled dress underneath it, her legs bare and her feet in some kind of rubber sneakers.

She was from the ship, he realized. Her face was in the shadow and he could not see it clearly.

"Yes?" he said.

"Will you see Mr. Williams?"

"Williams?"

"The chief officer," she said. "He's in this house."

Davy had not had time to distinguish between members of the ship's crew; he remembered clearly only the hysterical little steward and the fair-haired young officer who had been too badly burned. He had attended many others, but he did not remember them.

"Please," the girl said urgently, "he wants to see you."

He nodded and followed her to the door. They entered directly into a small sitting-room, and in the far corner, next to a radio turned very low, sat a man and a woman. Davy recognized the man as Pete Herman, a local fisherman and boat operator, and the woman as his wife. The man nodded his head, but he did not get up or move. For two hours he had battled the surf to bring survivors off the burning ship, and there was a bandage now on his hairy left arm, but for him the job was over.

Davy sensed again the indifference, almost apathy, that he had sensed since coming to the island. Jenkins might offer him a glass of rum, but, after all, the wireless operator was not really a native.

"In here," the girl said.

FOR the first time he really looked at her. The bright light of the sitting-room showed up her strained, tired face. Yet it was an attractive face, even with the messed traces of make-up that still clung to it. Her hair, blonde and long, was tied behind her neck with a piece of ribbon. In the man's topcoat she looked very small and younger than she probably was.

She took him into a bedroom; a tiny, boxlike affair, with a brass bed at one side, a bureau and a chair. He walked quickly to the bed and looked down at the man who was lying there, his body covered by a heavy blanket.

"Hello," the man murmured.

His lined face was pale and his lips bluish. His short-cut hair was streaked with gray and he looked around forty. There was a slight puffiness under his eyes.

Davy sat down beside the bed and opened his little bag. As he examined the man he was conscious again of the girl. She had moved toward a little window and stood with her back to it, watching him, her eyes serious, her lips tight.

After a time Davy asked: "Who brought you here?"

It was the girl who answered. "Mr. Herman—the man who owns the house," she said.

Davy looked again at the officer on the bed. There was in the man's eyes an understanding that he had been badly hurt; a full realization, too, of a heart condition that had probably bothered him for a long time. When he met Davy's look, it was almost as though he nodded.

"There'll be a couple of ships here sometime tomorrow," Davy said. "In the meantime you must stay in bed."

The man moved his head a little. "Peggy," he said, "have you got the statement?"

The girl nodded as she left the window. She took up a few sheets of paper lying on a chair, over the back of which was hung a blue jacket with faded gold bands on the sleeves. She passed the papers to the man and he clutched them in his fingers, looking at Davy.

"I want you to read this, Doctor," he said slowly. "Then I'll sign it and you can witness it, if you will."

Davy took the papers. The writing was in longhand and with a light feminine flow, and it was more than likely that the girl had written it from the man's dictation.

> "I, Joseph Williams, Chief Officer of the steamship *Island Princess,* holding deep-sea master's papers . . ."

Davy could feel his nerves tighten as he read.

> ". . . I swear, from personal knowledge, that the fire-fighting equipment aboard the vessel was in such bad condition that the crew was helpless to control the blaze . . . that the fire, of minor origin, would have been kept in hand with only slight damage to one compartment if the signal system had worked . . . it was impossible to close off watertight doors . . . the owners had been advised of these conditions . . . that the officers and crew did all that was possible under the circumstances, knowing full well that the ship was doomed . . . that the master had no alternative but to beach the vessel . . ."

The writing covered four pages and every word was an indictment against a company known as Cruise Liners Limited, holding them responsible for the loss of the *Island Princess* and the men and women who had perished in the fire and in the sea. It was an angry document, in a cold, factual way, and Davy's lips were clamped tight when he finished reading it.

He was thinking of the bodies in the wharf shed, and of the people he had treated. He reread the final paragraph.

> ". . . It may be said that, in writing this, I have repudiated my owners and employers. I have no other choice if I am to be loyal to the merchant marine, and keep pride in my cloth. All I have written is the truth."

Davy laid the papers on the bed and looked at Williams.

"I know I'm in poor shape," the man said quietly. He touched the papers with blunt fingers. "I want this to be read before the inquiry board. It tells the truth, Doc, and God only knows how they'll try to warp the truth before the thing reaches a board. They're that kind of a company."

He seemed to wait for breath. "I saw the Old Man burn. He knew the facts about the ship, but he didn't have— He wouldn't refuse to sail her. But he wouldn't leave her either, in the end. And maybe I could read in his eyes that he wanted me to tell the truth if I ever got off."

The man turned his head on the pillow and Davy could see the deep lines in his cheek and the veins in his neck.

"Got any idea what I've been thinking about?" Williams whispered. "It hasn't been nice, Doc. It was the only job I could get. My heart—well, I guess you know. I saw them loading all those people in that fire-trap, and sure, I spoke my piece and complained about the equipment, and I was told to keep quiet or go back to the beach. I should have, but I didn't."

"You'd better take it easy," Davy said softly. "I'll give you a sedative now." When the man had swallowed the sedative pill, Davy asked: "You want me to witness this statement?"

"Yes."

"Why me?"

"Because you're the local doctor. I trust you to get these papers into the right hands."

The girl gave Williams a pen and he raised himself a little and signed the statement, then passed the pen to Davy, and Davy signed.

"Keep those papers with you, Doc," Williams said. "If the owners knew—"



"No, I'm not hurt—you wanna back up and try again?"

His voice was suddenly hoarse and tired, and he lay back and closed his eyes.

Davy shut his bag and nodded to the girl. She followed him out of the room, past Pete and Mrs. Herman who were still beside the radio and did no more than glance up, then out the front door to the road.

The perspiration had dried on Davy's hair and shirt and the night air felt a little warmer. He looked toward the dark sea.

He heard the girl ask: "Doctor—what about him?"

For a moment Davy did not reply. He was thinking of the broken, burned-out ship and trying to picture the panic that he had read between the lines of Williams' statement. He was thinking of the people who had saved up the $69.50, or whatever it was, for a cruise into adventure and romance, and had ended in being trapped by firehoses that failed to hold water and firedoors that refused to close.

He walked into the road and toward a fence that guarded an embankment up from the beach at this point, and the girl followed him.

"He's quite sick," Davy told her slowly. "He has a cardiac condition—has had it, probably, for a long time. What happened today didn't help it any."



"He's sick," Davy said slowly. "Has a cardiac condition—has had it for a long time. What happened today didn't help it any." Peggy Simmons was silent, then asked, "How serious?"

"How serious?"

"He needs treatment under a good heart man. Right now he's suffering from overstrain and exhaustion and a badly wrenched back. I cannot tell you that he's not in danger, for he is."

She was silent for a moment, and now her hands were gripping the fence rail and her face was turned toward the invisible sea.

"He blames himself for serving in that ship," she said. "He's a very proud man."

Pride in his cloth. That was what Williams had written, Davy remembered. *Cloth* was the uniform.

"I'm Peggy Simmons," the girl explained. "I was social director for the cruise." She appeared to hesitate, and then she added quickly, "Perhaps you'd better give me that statement, Doctor."

"Why?"

"Because it's dynamite."

"I can understand that," Davy said. "But I promised him. I'll turn it over to the Coast Guard."

Again she was silent. Then she said: "Joe told me the owners would stop at nothing to get out of this mess as best way they can. They'll be stuck with lawsuits, but they'll fight them. And they'll be quick to silence anyone who has incriminating evidence. Joe has it, and they know that."

"What are you trying to tell me—that he's in danger?"

"Yes."

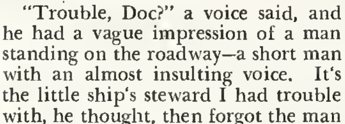
"From the owners of the ship?"

She turned again and gripped the fence railing with her face toward the sea. For a moment she seemed to be struggling with words. Then in a sudden rush she said: "I haven't told it to you very well. I've been trying to. I know Joe has a bad heart. I know right now he's almost given up. But I could do something about that. I know I could."

For a moment her voice was lost to Davy. Then it came back, pitched higher. "I know he's right about the way he feels. About the statement you're carrying in your pocket. But, God, I'm afraid of what they'll try to do to him! They'll hound him to change his testimony. . . . And even worse. I know what kind of a company they are. When it's a matter of a million dollars in lawsuits, what does a chief officer matter? And what does a statement mean when there isn't any Joe?"

He sensed the rise into hysterics and he tried to pull her around in time. But she never quite reached the hysterical point. As he took hold of her she muttered something, then suddenly went limp, and she was almost on the ground before his hands tightened to support her.

He got his arms around her and helped her across the road to the little house.



"Trouble, Doc?" a voice said, and he had a vague impression of a man standing on the roadway—a short man with an almost insulting voice. It's the little ship's steward I had trouble with, he thought, then forgot the man a moment later as he kicked at the front door of the cottage.

Pete Herman came to the door. The fisherman gave one sharp look then swung the door wide open. As Davy crossed the threshold Herman said: "In here," and opened a side door off the sitting-room.

The inner room had a camp cot with blankets and a pillow and Davy lowered the girl on it. He gave the fisherman a nod, then went back outside and crossed the road to where his bag was lying.

He did not think of looking for the man who had spoken to him.

When he came back the girl started to say something, but he shook his head, gave her a sedative and told her to try and sleep. And then he left the room and found Pete Herman and Pete's wife waiting for him. The radio had been turned off.

Davy went into the rear bedroom where Williams was lying and looked at the chief officer. The man was asleep and his pulse was normal.

Davy came back into the sitting-room.

"The young lady will be all right," he said to the fisherman and his wife. "It's mostly exhaustion. But I won't be far if you need me." He started for the front door.

"Doctor," said the old fisherman, "would you stop for a glass of rum?"

LONG afterward in the night, when he had been to the community hall and then had gone to Murphy's trading-store where there were other survivors, he remembered declining the invitation. He had not been ready for a glass of rum, but he remembered that Pete Herman had offered him one.

Most of the people in the trading-store were sleeping. They had curled up in blankets, lying on the floor around the big black stove, and there was nothing here to give Davy any concern. He had found most of that in the community hall, among the hurned and the sick.

As Davy left the store he saw the man in the yellow scarf—the one who had shouted, "Where were the damned officers?"—sitting in a corner alone. There was still fright and the traces of hysteria in the big man's eyes.

Suddenly Davy felt very weak. He did not trust himself to go home, to take the chance of lying down. He thought of Jenkins up at the wireless station and decided to go there. He could have a drink of good island rum, and there were questions he wanted to ask Jenkins; questions having to do with a ship's officer and a girl in whose eyes he had seen real fear.

At the station, Jenkins took him into a cozy parlor and poured him some rum. "Things are quiet," Jenkins told him. "But wait until morning and our little island will be the object of every plane and ship that can get here."

Davy looked at him. "Did you find out anything more about the owners of the ship?"

"Yes." The other man jiggled his glass. "They're one of those outfits that get into the game now and again when the traffic's lush, buy a couple of old wagons and run them till the ships are beat. This time they got caught."

"What will they do now?"

Jenkins got up to renew the drinks. "I'd say they will try to get their representatives in here first, to settle quick claims. They can't do anything about the dead, but they'll work on the living."

"And the officers and crew?" Davy asked.

Jenkins shrugged. "They're employees." He took a drink of his rum. "Of course, if there was something wrong about the way that ship went to sea—well, it wouldn't sound nice before an investigation board. But, if that were the case, I'm willing to bet they won't have much trouble with the kind of crew they signed on. They'll make sure nobody talks out of turn."

"How?"

"With cash. If you're in that spot, it's worth it. As a matter of fact, if you are their kind of an outfit, silence is worth anything."

Davy was silent for a moment. Then he said: "I don't know much about ships. But if something had been wrong, say with the equipment, how did it pass inspection? There are rules and regulations, aren't there?"

Jenkins looked at him. "Sure," he said. "There are regulations. There are inspections. But if they're going to be foolproof—and what is foolproof, anyway?—the inspectors have to depend on co-operation and some integrity from the other end. Most owners are that way. But you can pass an inspection, and if you're cheap and unscrupulous and don't give a damn for anything but the quick buck, you can let things slip until the next time."

JENKINS came across the room. He was looking straight into Davy's eyes. "You're asking me why a ship like that burns? You're saying, suppose something was wrong, how did it happen?" He paused. "Why?"

Davy returned the look. He saw the honesty in Jenkins' eyes. He put his hand in his pocket, brought out Williams' statement and handed it to the wireless operator.

Jenkins read through the pages and gave them back to Davy. Then he finished his drink in one gulp, and turned to the cupboard where the bottle was standing. "Brother!" he exclaimed, almost in a whisper. "I like this Williams. I like what he stands for."

And I like him, thought Davy. I like the girl who is sticking by him, even in sickness, even though he might not have a chance. I like . . . a lot of things . . .

"Hey, Doctor!"

He awoke with a start, gripping the arms of his chair, conscious of a light flowing through the window across the room, then of Jenkins standing in front of him, smiling, a cup of coffee in his hand.

"Have this," Jenkins said. "I woke up about half an hour ago, sitting in a chair like you." As Davy took the coffee he added, "The messages are piling up. The Coast Guard cutter's been delayed. She might make it about noon, now. That Norwegian ship will be even later."

Davy drank the coffee, but declined Jenkins' invitation to have breakfast. He wanted to get back into the village, to check on the survivors.

He left the wireless station and started down the hill, his neck stiff from sleeping in the chair and a dull pain across his eyes. To his left, stranded high on the low tide, was the black-streaked hull of the abandoned ship—an ugly, dead sight in the early-morning glow. He could see boats still moving back and forth between her and the shore, and he wondered what else the searchers had found, what other bodies had been discovered in the fire-racked interior of the lost vessel.

The sight of the ship sent a wave of anger through him. Then, as he came down into the village, he saw a seaplane tied up at the outer end of the main wharf. It was a commercial aircraft and it had not been there the previous night.

Davy went to the community hall and for some time he was busy examining his patients. There was a kitchen off the rear of the hall, and when he was finished he thought he would go through there and take the back lane up to Pete Herman's house.

The kitchen door was slightly open and he had his hand on the knob when a man's voice from the inside stopped him.

"I don't know why you're stalling us, Miss Simmons. We just want to talk to Williams."

And then he heard another man's voice, low and firm, "Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"That's a strange answer, Miss Simmons. They tell us you came ashore with him. They tell us he was your—pal. It seems to figure you would stick with him. He was sick, wasn't he?"

There was no answer from the girl.

"We have a plane here. If he's sick we want to fly him out, get him to a hospital. Isn't that what you want, too?"

AFTER a pause the voice went on: "Miss Simmons, you're being foolish. He'd want to see us. He's the senior officer of the ship now, and we're from the Company. He has responsibilities."

The low voice broke in again. "Where is he?"

"I told you—I don't know."

Davy heard the first man say: "I don't know why you're lying to us. What has Williams been saying? You know, a man in his physical condition is apt to go off on a tangent after an experience like you've all been through. If that's it, you can tell us—what has he been saying?"

Again there was no reply from the girl. The other voice came suddenly

to Davy's ears. It was angry, abrupt, and there was a dangerous edge to it.

"Hell, Jordan, what are we standing here arguing for? Let's go find this Williams. We don't need the girl."

A voice behind Davy said, "Doctor —and a woman touched his arm. He shook his head, turned away from her and opened the kitchen door.

Standing near the big stove was the girl, her face white, her lips thin and her eyes frightened. The two men with her wore topcoats and hats, although the day was warm. Otherwise they were inconspicuous, like ordinary businessmen, one of them carrying a bulging briefcase that he held high under his arm.

"Excuse me," Davy said and crossed to the sink at the far end of the kitchen. He found a glass on a shelf and poured himself a drink of water from the tap, without any sign that he recognized the girl.

"We'll talk to you later, Miss Simmons," said the man with the briefcase, the one whose voice was pitched low—a short, stocky man with a wide chin, full lips and eyes that were small and quick.

Still holding the glass of water in his hand, Davy heard the men leave the room and for a moment he did not move. Then slowly he turned and looked at the girl. She had her back to the stove and her eyes were on the door that the men had left open. For several moments she stood motionless, watching the doorway; then she looked at Davy.

"They've gone out by the front," she said. "They're from the shipping company."

"I heard some of the conversation," Davy said.

"I didn't do any good," she said. "They're more certain than ever now that Joe will tell the truth. They'll find him and offer him money at first, and when he refuses—"

She stopped abruptly and moved away from the stove, then halted again. "Perhaps you think I'm mad," she said. "If you heard them talking they must have sounded logical and sensible to you. I know it seems reasonable that they would want to talk to Joe. But—" She hesitated. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have brought you into this."

"I think," said Davy slowly, "that we had better move Joe Williams as soon as we can."

Her eyes sought his quickly.

"Move him?"

"Get him out of Pete Herman's house. They'll find him there eventually."

Her expression changed.

"Then you do believe me?"

"I believe you," Davy said. He was watching her. She had discarded the man's topcoat, and she looked older than she had seemed last night. There was no sign now of the almost hysterical girl who had collapsed in his arms.

"I believe you," he repeated, "because I think your friend is in danger —either from those men, or from himself. He's a very sick man. Does he know these two have arrived?"

"No."

"Don't tell him, then. If he's quiet, he has a chance. He needs rest in a hospital. And he needs your help, if he's going to pull through this. Go out the back door and walk up the lane to Herman's. I'll join you there."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. Just go to Herman's and say nothing to Williams about those men."

She gave him a quick, grateful look and opened the back door off the kitchen. Through the window over the sink he watched her reach the lane and start up the hill behind the row of cottages.



Peggy Simmons was standiog oear the big stove, ber face white and frightened. The two men with her wore topcoats aod hats, although the day was warm. "I don't koow why you're stalling us, Miss Simmons. We just want to talk to Williams. Where is he?" Peggy stood her ground.

He re-entered the main hall, found his bag and got out the front door before anyone could tag him. He stood on the step for a moment, looking around him, and he saw the two men again. They were standing at the foot of the wharf, talking with a group of people, and the one with the brief-case was taking notes.

It was then that Davy realized that Jim Jenkins had suddenly joined him. The big wireless operator said, "I'm looking for a man named Jordan. He's flying in; he represents the ship-owners."

Davy nodded toward the wharf. "There are two of them," he said. "Jordan and another."

"Under the circumstances," Jenkins said, "maybe you'd better take a look at this, Doctor."

He handed Davy a piece of paper—a wireless message. Davy saw first the name, Frank Jordan, and then the typewritten words:

REPORT IMMEDIATELY YOU CONTACT J.W. REPEAT AGAIN IMPERATIVE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING BE REACHED BEFORE PARTY IN QUESTION LEAVES ISLAND OR TALKS TO ANYONE.

The message was signed CURTIS.

"J.W." said Jenkins, with his eyes on Davy. "Joe Williams."

Davy handed back the paper. "I'd like you to do something for me, Jim," he said quickly. "If you see those two men make a move toward the hill—up where Pete Herman lives—try to stall them."

"How long?"

"Maybe half an hour."

"Right," Jenkins said.

Davy nodded to him and left the hall steps. Across the road, about fifty yards to the left, was Dr. Gordon's little white-painted office and parked next to the building was the panel truck that he had converted into an emergency ambulance. Davy walked rapidly to the machine, threw his bag on the seat and climbed in behind the wheel.

He drove to Pete Herman's house by the back way, along the lane. He knew that he had to move Williams before those two men found the ship's officer—move him somewhere safe, where he would have a chance. But where, and how?

Davy entered the Herman house by the kitchen door. Mrs. Herman was cooking at the big stove and the old fisherman was seated at the table, sipping a cup of coffee. He was wearing a heavy sweater and thigh boots, and he gave Davy a bland look.

"Excuse me," Davy said. "I've come to see my patient." He hesitated. "Are you going to sea, Mr. Herman?"

The man nodded and wiped his lips with the back of his hand. "For a spell," he said. "I told the girl she could keep the man here, and then lock up when they left. My wife goes with me."

A sudden thought, a hope, struck Davy. "You usually fish between here and Cape Breton, don't you?" he asked.

"Aye."

"Would you be going into port at Sydney?"

Herman shook his head. "No," he said.

It was definite, final, as was every word these fisherfolk uttered. Davy nodded and started for the door leading into the main part of the house, and suddenly the voice stopped him.

"Why?" he heard Herman ask.

He swung around, looking at the old fisherman, who still held the cup of coffee in his hand, his eyes not even directed toward Davy.

"I want to get my patient to a hospital," Davy said. "There's one at Sydney. When you said you were going to sea I thought of it."

"The man in the bedroom?" asked Herman.

"Yes."

"He's very sick, eh?"

"Very sick."

The old fisherman now turned his head slowly until his eyes were looking straight at Davy. They were deep, thoughtful eyes, and their expression was searching.

And then he asked: "It is very important to you, Doctor, that he goes to Sydney?"

"It might save his life."

"Then I will go into Sydney this trip. I'll take him."

Davy felt his throat suddenly choke up. He stared at Herman and tried to mumble thanks. He remembered the man's former apathy and indifference—and now he was offering to take his boat through the fishing grounds to Sydney because it was important to Doctor Fulton.

"When can he go?"

"Now . . . anytime. My ship's at the Cove—you can bring him there."

"I have the ambulance out back," Davy said, and added: "The young lady will be going with Williams, if that's all right."

The fisherman nodded. But he was not looking at Davy any longer. He had turned back to his coffee and a plate of bacon and eggs that his wife brought to the table.

Davy opened the door of the kitchen and walked into the sitting-room. In the instant that he saw the girl standing there he also noticed that the bedroom door was closed.

He walked quickly toward her. Her face was white, her eyes anxious.

"How is he now?" Davy asked quietly.

"He's awake. What—"

He interrupted her. "Listen to me," he ordered. "Herman's going to take you both to Sydney, Cape Breton. That's the closest port. You can get Williams into the hospital there. I'll send a message through the wireless station that you're coming, and they'll be ready for you. He has a good chance if he gets into the hospital. And when he's discharged, take him home with you, if you can. Keep him with you, and away from people: when he's stronger he can face them. I'll let the authorities know about him, and they'll have his statement."

He could see the tears coming to her eyes.

"Have you any money?" he asked.

"Some. I can get more."

Davy nodded. "I think you'll make it," he said.

She seized hold of his arm. "Doctor—" she began again, but he interrupted her.

"Stay here and watch the window."

He went into the bedroom, closed the door and crossed to the bed. He saw dull eyes turn in his direction and the man lying there raised his head slightly.

DAVY leaned over him. "We're taking you out of here," he said quietly. "You're going to a hospital where you'll be better off.

"The papers I gave you—" the man started to say.

"I have them. But it's up to you whether or not they'll be needed. Doesn't it matter that you tell your own story?"

He could see the faint suggestion of a shrug from the tired shoulders. The eyes neither confirmed nor denied.

"Peggy will be with you," Davy said.

The eyes flickered now.

"You wrote something about pride of cloth," Davy said. "I think that's fine, but it's not enough. Because I've talked to her and I know how she feels about you. I think you ought to have pride in that."

"I have. But—"

Davy straightened. "I think you can live for a long time," he said, "if you take hold of yourself and stand on your feet and have faith. You owe it to her."

Spots of red appeared in the white cheeks. The lips moved.

"It's your own affair," Davy said and turned toward the door. He heard the man call, "Doc!" and he turned for an instant. Williams had raised his head from the pillow.

"All right, Doc," the man said.

Davy opened the door and spoke to the girl by the window. "Will you get Mr. Herman? We're ready to go."

The old fisherman came immediately; he helped Davy take Williams from the bed and half-carry the man



The old fisherman helped Davy lay Williams on the stretcher in the ambulance, and for an instant Davy saw a look pass between Williams and Peggy. The chief officer tried to smile and Peggy's eyes lit up suddenly, transforming her face. Then Davy entered the cab.

through the kitchen and out the back door. For an instant Davy saw a look pass between Williams and the girl, and the chief officer tried to smile. Her eyes seemed to light up suddenly and transform her face.

They laid Williams on the stretcher in the ambulance and the girl stayed with him. Davy and the Hermans entered the cab. "Keep on the lane to the top of the hill and you'll strike the road," Herman said. "You know the Cove? It's about three miles."

Davy nodded. He drove the ambulance carefully, dodging the potholes of the lane, and came out on the main island road high above the village. They were skirting the sea and it looked blue and calm in the early sunlight.

"A good man—the one in back," he heard Herman say.

"How do you know?"

"I saw him at the ship. I helped to bring him to my house. He's a good man, and you're afraid for him, eh?"

Davy turned his head slightly. "Yes," he said.

The fisherman nodded. "That's enough for me. We should make an easy passage—this weather will hold."

"I want to thank you. You see—"

"It's enough," the old man interrupted.

They had been driving high among the bluffs, but now they hit a long, winding hill that led them down to the water's edge in a secluded cove. Davy could see a small wharf and a little schooner moored there. As he drove nearer he saw two men standing on the vessel's forecastle deck and another on the wharf.

He parked beside the wharf and Herman called to the men. They came quickly; by that time Davy was out of the ambulance and had opened the back doors. The men from the schooner asked no questions, but helped Davy remove the stretcher.

"Take him aboard and put him in my bunk," Herman ordered. "Then bring back the stretcher."

The men nodded. As they lifted the stretcher Davy walked toward it and looked down at the face of Joe Williams. The pale lips twisted in effort at a smile.

"Good luck!" said Davy.

He watched as the stretcher was taken aboard the schooner and carefully lowered down the cabin hatch. And then he was conscious of the girl standing beside him and he turned and looked at her. Her eyes were moist.

"I'll send a message from Sydney," she said softly.

"Yes," Davy said. "I'll be waiting to hear from you."

"I'll look after him. I'll keep him out of sight until he's better."

"That's fine."

She hesitated, and he added quickly: "You'd better get aboard."

"I'll never forget—never!" she said in a whisper.

He stood watching until the lines were cast off, until the beamy little vessel moved slowly from the wharf and out into the calm waters of the cove—and in the sternsheets he saw the girl raise her hand and wave.

Then he got behind the steering-wheel of the ambulance and swung the machine around, heading back up the road toward the village, glancing once toward the right as he came to the top of the big hill, seeing the tiny schooner like a black dot against the waters, just before the hills cut off his view.

He found that he was saying a little prayer for Joe Williams and his girl; or perhaps it was more a wish than a real prayer. He hoped that the cards were stacked for them.

He could sense a new atmosphere in the village when he drove the ambulance down the road and parked beside Dr. Gordon's office: the place looked more alive, expectant and almost excited. Then he noticed that there were three more seaplanes in the harbor, including a large flying-boat, and he took that to mean that the first influx of rescuers and officials had arrived.

He unlocked the front door of the office and his toe kicked a folded sheet of paper that had been slipped under the door. He stooped and picked it up and as he walked across the tiny waiting-room he unfolded the sheet and read the uneven, hastily scrawled words:

I was called back to the station. Checked first with the Herman house and found it deserted so guess you managed to do whatever it was you planned. Your men in Murphy's store when I left, so all clear that end. See you later.

Jenkins.

The note relaxed him a little. He drew aside the curtain that hung across the doorway separating the waiting-room from the office and surgery, walked to a desk and sat down. He let his head rest on his hands for a moment, feeling tired and weak, knowing he still had to go through this day before he could hope for any rest; that there would be papers and certificates to sign and questions to answer when the Coast Guard vessel arrived.

He heard the front door open and his nerves jumped. He got to his feet quickly, walking to the curtain and sweeping it aside.

A woman stood in the outer office, holding a child by the arm. "She cut her hand on a broken glass," the woman said.

SUDDENLY Davy relaxed. He took the little girl inside to the surgery, removed his coat and hung it on a wall peg. He washed his hands at the sink, then cleaned and bandaged the wound, which was in the child's left palm and not deep.

He gave the tearful little girl a stick of candy from the stock that Dr. Gordon kept for emergencies like this, and put his hand on her shoulder as they walked back to the outer office.

He was talking to the mother when the two men entered the building.

They came in quietly, the stocky man with the briefcase, and the other one. They glanced briefly at Davy and then they walked to chairs at the side of the waiting-room, removing their hats and sitting down with the subdued air of patients who had come to see the doctor. The man with the briefcase laid it on the floor beside his chair and took up a magazine from a small table, leafing through the pages.

The other man stared at the opposite wall. He was large and bony, with a sharp face that contrasted with his companion's almost pudgy one.

"Thank you, Doctor," Davy heard the woman say. He nodded to her, and watched as the door closed behind the woman and the child. Then he turned.

The stocky man laid aside his magazine and rose to his feet, and his companion followed his example.

"Yes?" Davy said.

"My name's Jordan, Doctor," the first man said, and picked up his briefcase. "This is Mr. Harris. We'd like to talk to you."

"All right."

"We're looking for the chief officer of the *Island Princess*—a Joseph Williams."

"The town constable has a list of survivors," Davy said.

The trace of a smile appeared on Jordan's lips. "We've checked that, of course," he said. "We know that Williams came ashore. We also know that he appeared to be very ill."

"He wasn't the only one," Davy said.

"No. But you'll remember him, of course—I understand he had a bad heart. You probably treated him."

"I treated a great many."

"Yes. They're saying fine things about you in the village. I wonder—could we go into your office? What I have to say is confidential."

Davy nodded. He was listening to Jordan but his eyes were half on the other man, Harris. The big fellow was moving around the room, casually, as though waiting for the conversation to end, but with the sharp glances of a man who was watching everything.

Davy led the men into the inner office and his eye immediately fell on his coat hanging from the wall peg. The lining was turned back, and with a nervous start he saw that the inner pocket was exposed, and that Williams' statement was sticking out of it.

"Sit down, please," he said, and reached for the coat. He got into it as casually as he could, and buttoned the jacket, at the same time walking toward his desk. He felt his heart pumping.

The men had taken chairs, with Jordan closest to the desk, and as Davy sat down the stocky man said, "I don't believe in fencing, Doctor. For some reason you seem reluctant to talk about Williams, so I might as well say right off that we know certain things. We know that he was taken to a house owned by a man named Herman, and that a Miss Simmons was with him,"—Jordan almost smiled—"the same young lady who was in the back of the community hall this morning. And that you attended Williams last night. Since then Williams has disappeared, and the Simmons girl with him. The house, too, is empty. That's what we know, Doctor."

DAVY reached for a packet of cigarettes. He found a match in his pocket and lit a cigarette, at the same time looking at Jordan.

"Well?"

"What did you do with Williams, Doctor?"

"I moved him."

"Where?"

Davy shook his head. "As a doctor, I can't answer that. He's been moved where no one can bother him."

It was almost as though a sigh escaped Jordan's lips. At the same time Davy noticed that the other man, Harris, moved uncertainly.

"I see, Doctor," Jordan said easily. There was a smoother tone to his voice now. He looked completely relaxed, his briefcase resting on his knees. "I'd be inclined to presume that you were also influenced by someone when you moved Williams. By Miss Simmons, perhaps?"

"There's no need to presume," Davy said. "I moved the man for his own well-being. The survivors of the ship are my responsibility."

"But you won't tell us where Williams is?"

"I won't tell anyone. I'm not singling out you in particular."

"Oh, but you are, Doctor," Jordan said. "We know something else. We know that Williams wrote a statement and gave it to you."

Davy attempted to cover his surprise but he knew that he failed. The words, spoken in the man's almost syrupy voice, had thoroughly startled him and he realized that he had almost dropped his cigarette. For a moment he did not understand how they knew about the statement, and his mind whirled through a dozen possibilities that it almost instantly rejected.

And then he remembered a voice saying, "Trouble, Doc?" and he saw the face of the little ship's steward outside Pete Herman's cottage last night. That was the answer. He wondered how much the steward had



heard of the conversation between himself and Peggy Simmons. All of it, or a portion, it had been enough.

He could feel the big man's eyes boring into him. Jordan seemed as relaxed as ever.

"So we come down to fundamentals, Doctor," the latter continued, as though he accepted without asking that Davy admitted the existence of the statement. "We've had a major disaster in the loss of our ship; a tragic one. I don't have to tell you that Mr. Harris and I represent the owners. We're making every effort to get at the truth of the matter, to see that no one suffers—at least, financially. But in these cases there are certain people who try to make gain out of a tragic accident, and invariably they are the ones who have lost the least. You understand, then, that we must review everything that is told or written, so that no lies are circulated."

"You shouldn't be afraid of lies," Davy said, watching them closely now. "You can beat lies witb the truth."

"Unfortunately, Doctor, it's not as simple as that. One lie breeds other lies—especially if there's a chance for gain." Jordan leaned forward a little, his elbow on the briefcase. "I recognize you as a moral man, Doctor. Let me tell you something about Williams: He's a man with a chip on his shoulder, a trouble-maker, a former ship's captain knocked down because he couldn't hold a command. Our company hired him without realizing what he was, until it was too late to pull him off the ship. On the voyage we had messages from the captain, saying that Williams was causing trouble, that he wasn't fit to carry out his duties. He's an alcoholic with a twisted mind."

Suddenly Davy knew the whole truth. He thought of that little schooner plying the seas toward Sydney and he wished her Godspeed. He had listened to the man across from him and the words had been almost too smooth, too effortless—perhaps even too logical to be believed. And then Jordan had said: "An alcoholic with a twisted mind."

That had been his mistake. He should not have said that to a doctor who had worked in the public wards of a city general hospital.

"I think, Doctor," he heard Jordan say, "that it's your duty to turn any papers over to us."

"I haven't got them," Davy said. He doubted that the lie would mean anything. He realized that these men were dangerous; that for them the stakes were high and that they would play the game any way that they had to. He glanced at the other man—the one named Harris. There was a slight curl to Harris' lips and his eyes were dark.

"What have you done with them?" Davy heard Jordan ask. The voice was losing some of its easy flow, and when Davy looked at him the man added: "Stick to medicine, Doctor. What happened to the ship isn't your business."

Davy felt his lips suddenly tremble. He had watched the fair-haired young officer die and he had seen the ship's doctor already dead from burns, and he had eased the pain and suffering of dozens of others—and this fat little man with the sharp eyes told him that it wasn't his business.

He was about to reply when he was conscious of shouting outside the building. It appeared to be coming from the front, from the direction of the community hall. The two men also noticed it and Jordan turned his head sharply.

They heard the front door open. A young voice—a boy's probably—called: "You there, Doctor?"

"Yes!"

"Mr. Jenkins said to tell you—the Coast Guard cutter's been sighted off East Point."

"Wait—" Davy began, but the door banged shut. Slowly Davy rose to bis feet. He snubbed out his cigarette in an ashtray and looked around for his black bag. Then he remembered he had left it in the ambulance and he said, "I'm closing up now. I have work to do at the hall."

He took a step, but with a quick movement the man Harris stood and barred the way to the sitting-room.

"We want those papers," Harris said.

"Get out of my way," Davy said. "And get out of the office."

"We want the papers first. We've come a long way."

Davy moved forward and Harris caught him by the front of his jacket. Davy could feel a pull on the buttons and instantly he swung his right fist. It was an ineffectual blow, but it made the big man release his coat. He staggered a little as the hand let go, and at that instant Harris hit him.

He slid crazily across the floor, collided with the examination table and fell sideways, upsetting a wastepaper basket as his body fell across it.

He heard Jordan cry: "You fool—you damned fool!"

"Shut up," Harris said. "He went for me first. I've stopped kidding with him."

Davy started to lift himself from the floor. The overturned basket was a foot or so from his head, and spilled out under his chest was a deluge of papers—empty envelopes, form-letters from pharmaceutical companies, a lot of stuff he had thrown into the basket and had forgotten to clean out.

He got his left hand under his body and the fingers searched for the inner pocket of his coat. As he raised himself he groaned, and fell back a little, and in that instant he slipped Williams' statement from his pocket and into the pile of papers, pawing with his hands as though floundering.

His head hurt when he got to his feet. He stood upright, not swaying but his legs weak and heavy. The big man's fist had knocked most of the remaining strength out of his tired body, but he struggled to hold himself erect.

He saw anxiety and fear in Jordan's little eyes. It was obvious that the man with the briefcase did not like this turn of events. His weapons were eloquence and persuasiveness, and probably cash.

But at the moment Davy hated him almost as much as the big man with the clenched fists who still stood in the doorway. He hated them both, more for what they stood for than what they were, thinking of the burned people and Joe Williams, and the words the chief officer had written—"Pride of Cloth."

He came at Harris, hearing Jordan whisper: "For God's sake, don't—"

He drove his fist at the big man, trying for power that was not there any longer because he was too tired, and knowing only that his knuckles somehow connected—liking that—and then backing away from the savage attack of the other man.

In a dazed way he could see Jordan tugging at his companion's arm, appealing to him in a high-pitched voice, and being pushed aside, almost thrown.

Davy tried to laugh in Harris' face as he felt himself going down. With his angry fists the big man was chopping away at the stack of chips that Jordan had built for them, and throwing the game—knocking a tired man insensible, and losing. . . .

The men were gone when Davy dragged himself off the floor. They had stopped long enough to ransack the desk, to open all the cupboards and the steel filing cabinet, and when Davy staggered to a chair he felt his jacket flapping loose. The buttons had been torn off and the pockets had been searched.

The chair was beside the desk and he put his arms across the top and let his head fall on them. It was a long time before he could breathe evenly. His lips felt thick and bruised, there was a cut over his left eye, and his head throbbed with pain.

After a time he got up, steadying himself for a moment with his hand on the desk; then he knelt beside tbe pile of papers on the floor and found Williams' statement. He jammed

the sheets of paper into his hip pocket and stood up. Then he made for the sink and washed his bruised face and doctored the cut over his eye.

He was applying a strip of adhesive when he heard the front door open. He went cold inside as he swung to the doorway into the waiting-room.

The pasty face of the passenger in the yellow scarf appeared. For a moment the man stared at Davy's battered appearance. Then he seemed to recover himself, at last to the point of licking his lower lip and saying: "I wonder, Doctor—could you give me something to calm my nerves?"

Everything inside Davy went loose. He began to laugh, and although it hurt his face, he kept on laughing, while the man in the yellow scarf stared at him in half-frightened bewilderment.

Davy ran his hands across his eyes. "I'm sorry," he said. "Something just struck me as funny. Sit down. I'll mix you a bromide."

He had discharged the man when Jim Jenkins came to the door. The wireless operator took one look at Davy's face and demanded, "What happened to you?"

"Somebody paid a bill," Davy said.

"Those two shysters?"

Davy nodded, and put his hands on the examination-table for support. He felt dizzy again.

"They've pulled out," Jenkins said. "I saw their plane take off." He looked again at Davy's face, his forehead pulled in a deep frown. "So Joe Williams would have got this—or worse."

"Perhaps."

"I think you saved his life."

"I don't know. I think, in the end, that's up to him." Davy reached out and touched the other man's arm. "Stay with me, will you, Jim? I want to send a message to Sydney. That's where I sent Williams. Then I have to see the Coast Guard commander. Stick with me until then."

Afterward, when Joe Williams' statement was locked in the captain's safe aboard the cutter, Davy managed to escape from the hectic activity that had suddenly descended on the little village. He went home and threw himself across the bed, and slept.

Eventually three messages were brought to him. One was from his uncle, saying that the doctor was flying home. The second was an invitation from the mayor of the village asking him to be a guest at a dinner to be held on Saturday night in the community hall. That surprised and pleased him, and made him feel a little proud.

But the third message arrived the next day and gave him the greatest satisfaction. It was dated at Sydney, and it said that all was well. •

WORDLY WISE



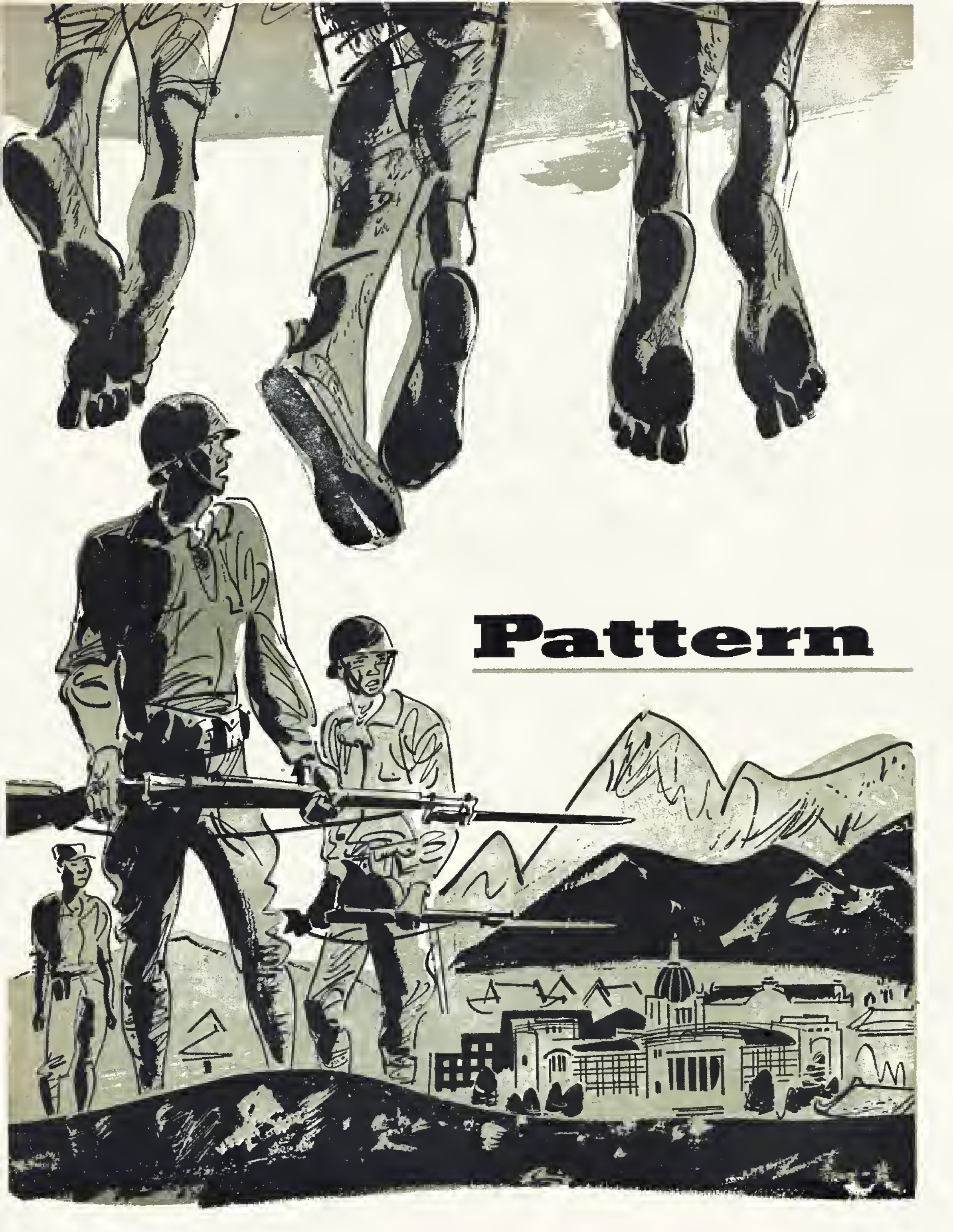
PANTIES

HIS DIAGNOSTIC SKILL brought early fame to a Third Century Roman physician named Pantaleon. Though he was a Christian in an era when members of the faith were persecuted, he achieved great prominence. Eventually be was made personal physician to the Emperor Galerius. Then, in the year 305, be was martyred because of his faith. Later named a saint, he is revered as the patron of pbysicians.

Italians borrowed his name, added an "e" and made St. Pantaleone the special protector of Venice. From there, the name passed to the Italian stage, where it became attached to a stock cbaracter in low comedy. Invariably, this comic Pantaleone wore spectacles, slippers, and a lower garment tbat consisted of both breecbes and stockings—all in one piece. Tbis piece of attire was so distinctive that it eventually took the name of the saint.

Modified into *pantaloons,* it came to stand for loose-fitting breecbes. Then it was abbreviated to *pants,* and became a designation for trousers in general. A fourth—and perhaps a final—change in the saint's name took place quite recently, when women took to wearing *panties.*

—Webb B. Garrison

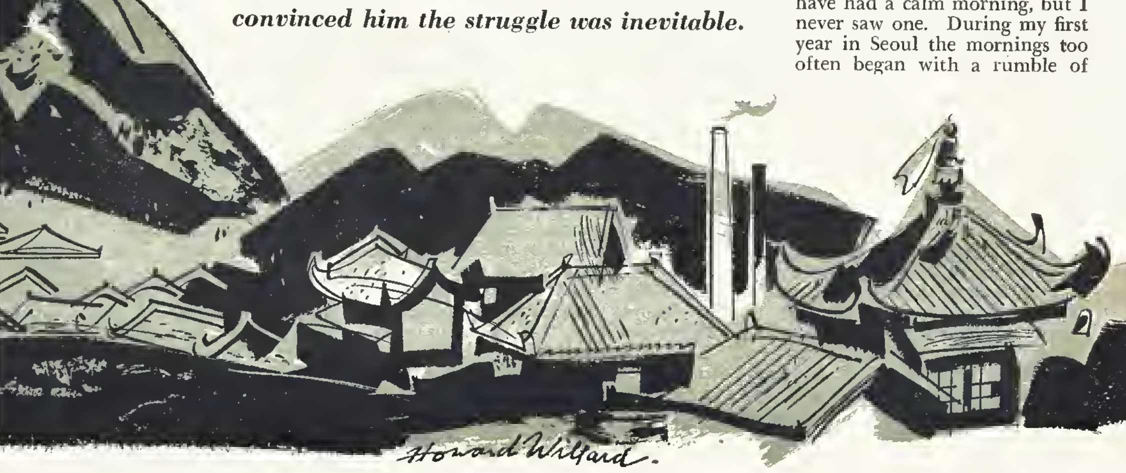


Pattern

• *Lt. Col.* ***JAMES WILSON***
Former Military Mayor of Seoul

For Chaos

Before the Korean War began, few Americans ever had heard of Seoul—or, for that matter, Korea itself. But here's one American who had, and whose adventures convinced him the struggle was inevitable.



MINE WAS A WEIRD ASSIGNMENT, even when it's stacked up against the other weird assignments that cropped up following the abrupt surrender of the Japanese on August 14, 1945. I was made the military mayor of Seoul, a city of two million people I had never seen, in a country I had heard about mainly through brief military dispatches. In books I'd read, Korea had been more often referred to as Chosen, or, as it came out in the English translation, The Land of the Morning Calm.

Somewhere in its 3000 years of bloody history, Korea might have had a calm morning, but I never saw one. During my first year in Seoul the mornings too often began with a rumble of

trucks passing through the streets, collecting the bodies of those who had died during the night.

The events that plunged me into the midst of Russian spies, Commie fifth columnists, Oriental bandits, dope peddlers, counterfeiters and nationalistic assassins began prosaically enough. I was with the Air Force in the spring of 1945, island-hopping on our way toward Tokyo, when orders came through transferring me to the States for a course in military government. I thought at the time, as did everyone else assigned to the course, that we were being trained for the occupation of Japan. . . .

I will never forget my first impression of Seoul, the Forbidden City. A city teeming with two million people, and yet, for all the stocky little people swarming through the streets, it was a lifeless city. Imagine, if you can, a great American city from which all city officials, bankers, manufacturers, public-utility heads, store-owners, shopkeepers, and executives of all kinds have been removed. Imagine, then, all the remaining people, not as self-reliant, educated American citizens, but as a helpless people raised to a lifetime of virtual slavery.

That was Seoul.

SINCE 1910 the Japs had occupied Korea. They had imposed their iron will upon everything. They owned everything worth owning, and taxed the rest beyond its worth. They reduced the Koreans to slaves by keeping them ignorant, on the theory that what the people didn't know about they wouldn't want. They did educate, in an elementary sort of way, about 15 percent of the people, not because they wanted to but because they needed them for menial clerical jobs. To a microscopic percentage who seemed loyal to Japan they gave university education, because they too were needed in medicine, law and administration, as go-betweens. . . . And now the Japs were gone.

Mighty clever, those Japanese. They had not modernized Seoul. They had, instead, in their thirty-five years of occupation, superimposed their plans for a modern city right on top of the old plans, and then ruthlessly cut through everything in their way. Wide, straight boulevards had been blasted through ancient slums and ancient temple grounds alike. From Mt. Namsan, the modern part of Seoul—radiating outward from the central group of government buildings—they created a pattern of streets and encircling boulevards that lay like a coarse spiderweb over the old city. Within a hundred yards of any modern thoroughfare the city continued to exist as during the days it was in the hands of the Manchus of China.

There was, however, one improvement that was city-wide. The Japs had provided electric lights for almost every bamboo hut and paper shanty in town. Not, I learned, because they wanted to. The candles, lamps, and Japanese lanterns that had been used to illuminate the rabbit-warren slums had proved to be the source of such disastrous fires that the Japs had put in electricity as a fire-prevention measure to save their own property.

That, in brief, was the city I took over as mayor. I moved into the City Hall with my staff of 30 officers and 120 enlisted men. Up the street—we called it Pennsylvania Avenue because it was flanked by palaces and government buildings—was the national capitol, in which were housed the officers and men of the Army of Occupation, who would take over the administration of all Korea. My job was to prepare citizens of Seoul for formation of their own city administration, and the job of my colleagues in the capitol was to prepare the people of Korea for the formation of their own national administration. According to our military directives, it was all very simple.

On the other hand, there were such things as what to do with the bandits who were hi-jacking the rice we were having shipped in to feed the starving people. We were on the long end of a long supply line, and food was scarce enough without having it stolen before it arrived.

We did have the nucleus of a Korean police force. The Japs had been much too shrewd to put in their own nationals in policing the rabbit warrens in which most of the Koreans lived. Even after thirty-five years, a Jap policeman could go in there and vanish. So the Japs had used Koreans to police the worst sections of Seoul, and those Jap-trained cops we had with us.

The trouble was that they were Jap-trained. So two jeeps and a truckload of rice were missing? Out would go the Jap-trained cops, and in would come a dozen known Korean bandits. The bandits would be strung up by the thumbs, according to the best Japanese methods of interrogation, and the suggestion made that the truck and jeeps be returned. Should this mercy-measure prove ineffective, the bandits would be questioned more earnestly, this time with the assistance of three-cornered bamboo rods industriously applied to the stretched abdomens. The trucks and jeeps would be returned before dawn.

Effective though this tribute to deductive detective work might be, as an American mayor I could not approve of it. If we were to show democracy in action, it could not be through terroristic methods. The Koreans had come to look upon the police as the enforcers of a dictatorial rule. Our job was to show that the police in a democracy were the protectors of the free. A subtle idea to present at first, but think it over: Right there, in one simple rule, you have the difference between a democracy and a police state.

IN the history books, it will be recorded that the first Red attack upon Korea was launched on June 25, 1950, at 4 A.M. That is not quite exact. The first attack, more dangerous in its way than any that have been launched since, arrived slowly, but overwhelmingly, throughout the fall of 1945. So slowly, in fact, that we scarcely knew about it until we were virtually overwhelmed. Then it was almost too late.

It was a cold bleak morning in November when my sergeant, a worried expression on his face, reported the arrival of another batch of "refugees."

"I don't know where they're all coming from, sir," he said, "but if we get many more of 'em, we're going to be in serious trouble. It's all our ships can do to bring in enough rice to feed the people of Seoul, let alone feed ten thousand refugees."

"Ten thousand?" I exclaimed. "I thought there were only a few hundred."

"That was yesterday. This batch came in last night, and they're still pouring in. No end to 'em."

I was dumfounded. Except for the refugees returning to their homeland from China, we should have no such problem. The country hadn't been touched by the war. Even the one bomb reported to have fallen on Korea had turned out to be nothing more than an empty wing tank, dropped by accident from a photo plane. Why should these people suddenly pack up and leave their farms and villages, when these farms and villages were undamaged?

Captain George Cosson, of Omaha, Nebraska, and I piled into a jeep, and with my Hawaiian-Korean sergeant acting as both driver and interpreter, went out to see what had gone wrong. Most of the refugees were reported flowing through the East Gate, so we headed that way. Long before we reached the gate we encountered a procession of the most wretched human beings I have ever seen. Already they were starting to leave the column in which they had arrived, and were scattering through the crooked little side streets. I couldn't have them begging all over town, so I put in a hurried call for a detail of police to direct the mob into an abandoned Japanese army camp. There, at least, I might

Illustrated by HOWARD WILLARD

be able to keep them in some kind of order.

I still couldn't believe my eyes. The refugees were coming in hundreds and thousands. Some of them were stark naked in the bitter November cold, and even the best dressed wore nothing more than ragged blankets. There did not seem to be a healthy man or woman in the lot, and there were no children. This was no collection of refugees such as I had seen before. These people were the aged and the sick and the crippled and—adding an extra note of horror to the scene—the insane.

I had my interpreter pull out a stooped, elderly man who looked more intelligent than his fellows.

"Where are you from?" I asked.

My interpreter started to translate my question, but the old man answered in halting English. "From the north," he said, and then his story came out. The Russians, he said, were rounding up everyone who was too old or weak or ill to work as common laborers, and were driving them south of the 38th Parallel. "They say they don't need us. They say that if we can't work, they cannot feed and clothe us. Some of us are old teachers and scholars, but they say they will bring in their own teachers. Some of us are shopkeepers, but they have taken our shops away from us. The rest of us—" he waved his hand at the wretched mob filing by—"you can see for yourself what we are."

I could see all too clearly, now. I could see the Russians dodging their responsibility of caring for the poor and weak. I could see them shipping these human derelicts south for the Americans to care for. And I could see the vicious strategy apparent behind it all.

These people were not being herded south just to add to our burdens. These people were an army, though armed only with misery and hungry stomachs. An army not to be halted by shells and machine-gun fire, but an army designed to eat us out of the food that already was scarce, deprive us of the clothing we needed for our own poor during the long cold winter ahead, and drain us of the medical supplies and help so desperately needed for our South Koreans.

For all we could tell, it could be an army carrying with it the frightful menace of plague and typhoid. And, because we were Americans, who believed in such things as mercy and fair play, we would welcome this army, and try to take care of it. Oh, the Russians had this all figured out, and they had it figured out that we would fail in our job. They saw starvation ahead for us, and riots, and chaos. They saw us forced to withdraw in defeat, and they saw themselves sweeping into South Korea without firing a shot.

For six months the Russians drove into South Korea their invading army of starving refugees. All told, we received more than 1,500,000 of them. Enough, under normal circumstances, to wreck the entire economy of the country. But we, after our first shock of surprise, were ready for them.

I had Army trucks and trains out to pick up the refugees at the 38th parallel and haul them in comfort the thirty miles to Seoul. Doctors met them, gave medical care to those who needed it, and eliminated any spread of disease at the start. We put the more learned of the refugees to work teaching their fellows the meaning of democracy. When they were ready, we had them elect their own camp leaders, police their own barracks, run their own sanitation department, and issue food and clothing from the supplies we donated them. When the one-time Japanese army camps became overcrowded with refugees, we put the ablest men to work building new barracks.

So proud were these pitiful people of their new responsibilities, and so eager were they to show their appreciation of being treated as free human beings, that even the most handicapped of them contributed what help they could. The result was that the barracks they built furnished housing better than was to be found in most of the homes in Seoul. When spring neared we sent thousands of volunteer refugees to the rice-paddies in the south, where they helped enormously to swell the rice crop. Within a year not only had most of the refugees been absorbed by communities all over South Korea, but they were definite assets to their new land.

Of course the Russians didn't let us proceed in our resettlement program without the usual Red harassments. When no riots followed the arrival of the refugees, the Reds sent through their own agitators, in the guise of refugees, to foment trouble. They got nowhere with these tactics, but they were not through trying. They would crop up again.

In the meantime, we were having political troubles of another kind. As I have said, our job was to train the people of Seoul to run their city on democratic lines. Our period of occupation was to last but three years, so we had to work fast. In this we had what we thought was the assistance of the old Korean government leaders who had fled to China with the arrival of the Japs thirty-five years before. Now they were with us again, flown in from China to help in person the cause they had fought for so long from exile. Or at least that is what I thought at the time.

The president of this government-in-exile was Syngman Rhee, the same Rhee who was just elected president in the first South Korean election by direct popular ballot. I didn't have much to do with him, since at the time he was but a citizen helping the military government in the national capitol. My troubles were created by smiling, amiable Kim Koo, sometimes called the Redeemer of Korea, and sometimes, more accurately, known as Kim Koo, the Assassin.

What a boy! There was no telling how old he was, because he didn't have a gray hair in the rich black mane he wore, but he was old in the murder-racket back in 1917, when he killed a Japanese general and mangled two high-ranking government officials with a single well-pitched bomb. And he was an alert, fast mover; almost before I knew he was in town, he had installed himself and his gang of personal hatchet men in the vacated mansion once owned by a rich Japanese gold-mine operator. The next day he liberated a few limousines (600 of them) for his personal use, taking advantage of the fact that the one-time Jap owners were not around to protest, and that we, he thought, were too busy to catch him at it. And the next day he was ready to strong-arm his way into control of the city by the simple expedient of seeing to it that anyone who stood in his way turned up dead.

By this time I had a pretty fair intelligence service in action. For the most part it was composed of personally-selected young patriots who had managed to educate themselves in spite of the Japs, and because they knew that only through education could they ever hope to liberate their country. From them I soon had a complete case history of Kim Koo, and a pretty good picture of what I was up against.

Kim Koo's story is one of such villainy and intrigue that, beside it, the fictional accounts of sinister Oriental figures turn pale. While still a boy he had learned that murder, well-planned and executed, was a quick way to fame and fortune. And the times were just made for a boy of that bent and talent. The Japs, paving the way for their invasion, had murdered the Queen of Korea. With his bare hands young Kim Koo strangled the Jap captain believed to have committed the crime. Then, with an awareness of the power

Men speak of what they know;
women of what pleases them.

—J. J. ROUSSEAU

of advertising rare in a boy of his age, he left his name and address pinned to the chest of his victim. Overnight he became a national hero.

The Korean leaders found him most useful in eliminating critics. He became their unofficial butcher boy, and when the Jap invasion actually took place in 1910, the Korean leaders took Kim Koo with them on their flight to China. What followed is incredible.

Though all of Korea lay under the domination of its Jap conquerors, this handful of exiles in China boldly proclaimed themselves the official rulers of Korea. Not only that, but for thirty-five years, without ever setting foot in Korea, they got by with it. Syngman Rhee toured the courts of the world, including Washington, selling himself as the logical ruler of Korea. No one in Korea came forward to challenge his claim to his self-appointed title. No one could—not with the Japs there to silence any presumptuous spokesman! The Japs, and, of course, Kim Koo, the Assassin.

KIM was in exile, but as I said before, he knew the power of advertising. He set up an underground propaganda system in his homeland that proclaimed, among other things, that hope for the liberation of Korea would never die as long as he was alive. The Koreans liked this idea, but Kim knew they couldn't be expected to like it for the rest of their lives if nothing much happened. So he arranged to keep things happening. Like the time in 1915 when he slipped poison in the *suki-yaki* of a Jap delegation visiting China, or the time, already mentioned, when he tossed the bomb into a group of Jap dignitaries in China.

Since there was always an element of risk in these personally conducted excursions into mayhem, he devised an even better system involving no risk at all. It consisted of an Oriental refinement of the Big Lie. Every time a Jap was murdered—and a lot of them were—Kim Koo claimed personal credit for it. No matter where the Jap was killed, be it in Korea or China, the rumor would swiftly spread that the red hand of Kim Koo, the Assassin, had moved mysteriously to strike again. Through this system he soon became, in the eyes of the downtrodden Koreans, an awesome, sinister symbol of liberty whose vengeful figure was everywhere.

A knife in the back? A broken neck? A slight touch of poison? A murder arranged to look like hara-kiri? Ah, be careful, my friend! Kim Koo is near!

There was only one thing wrong with this system. There was no money in it.

Kim soon remedied that oversight. He sent the word through his underground system that he was raising an army that would soon sweep through Korea, driving all Japs before it. To support his army he needed funds from all loyal Koreans. His hatchet men put the arm on all Koreans, rich and poor alike, and it was not long before the gold was flowing China-ward in a gratifying stream. Some of the Koreans, wanting a little more concrete evidence of the existence of such an army before donating their last few yen, conveniently turned up dead, and thereafter the contributions continued, year after year, with no unpatriotic interruptions.

There is no evidence that Kim Koo ever had anything like an army. No organized troops ever were seen. But what he did have was a goon squad, a larger crew of hatchet men, and a small army of rumor-spreaders, collectors, blackmailers, and extortionists. They served his purpose—not Korea's—better than could any group of soldiers.

This organization, which had served him well and made him a rich man, he now proposed to put in action against the Americans. After all, if we were dumb enough to invite him into the country he had been systematically milking for years, we were too dumb to stand long in his way.

His first call at my office must have been a shattering experience. He swept up to City Hall in one of his stolen limousines, with his bodyguard and a half-dozen of his goons following behind. They then tried to pull a snow job on my men stationed in the hall to assist Koreans on legitimate business. My men didn't snow worth a hoot, and the goons found themselves out on the street without quite knowing whether they had been shown out or thrown out.

Somewhat chastened, Kim Koo took his place in the line of callers waiting to see me. However, such was the magic of his name (or the terror it inspired) that none of my callers would enter until Kim Koo had been served first.

He entered politely enough, hissing a smiling greeting in lisping English, and announcing at once that he had come to help me.

"Just how," I asked, "do you propose to help?"

He was ready for me. "Wiss my Boy Scouts," he said, surprisingly enough. "You like Boy Scouts?"

I admitted I liked Boy Scouts.

"I, also," he said. "I organize them for you. Be big help. Guide refugees. Show Americans the city. Take food to the poor. Be big help to everybody. All I ask maybe you give me some old worn-out soldier clothes, so Boy Scouts have uniforms."

A nice move. I could see the neatly-uniformed troops he had in mind, all right, but I doubted that Boy Scouts would be in the uniforms. I told him, flatly, that any old clothes we had would go to clothe the naked refugees, that we would distribute our own food to the poor to be sure the poor got it, and that we would run our own information bureaus for sight-seers.

There was no change in his smiling face as he backed out of the door, but from that moment on I was marked for assassination. That night a warehouse of old clothing was raided, three truckloads of rice were hi-jacked, and three Koreans working with us were murdered. Yes, Kim Koo was back.

What Kim Koo did not know was that I had organized a harmless little sanitation department under my Department of Congress called the Market Inspection Squad. Theoretically the Koreans on this squad were to patrol the markets, keeping their eyes open for spoiled fruits, rotting vegetables, and other indications of unsanitary conditions. They were laughed at a lot, but accepted as just another indication of the crazy ideas on cleanliness that seemed to obsess all Americans. In the meantime these sharp little operators were spotting every item that appeared on the black-market, picking up every word on the source of stolen goods, and keeping an alert finger on the pulse of gossip that was the life-blood of the city. Little could go on, from the theft of a pound of rice to



the theft of a truck, about which one or another of my boys didn't hear.

If any ordinary bandits had stolen the old uniforms and the rice, the food and clothing inevitably would turn up in the black-market, and I would have the information, plus the names of the thieves, in a matter of hours. No rice and clothing showed up.

This non-appearance could have only one meaning. The food and clothing were being stored, and if my suspicions were confirmed, they were being stored for no good purpose.

Then began something of a reign of terror. Trucks loaded with supplies for our city and our refugees were leaving from the port of Inchon by the score every hour. They carried rice, dried fish, dried meat, clothing, cooking utensils, and building material of all types. But not all the trucks, particularly not those on the night shift, were arriving.

Sometimes we would find a dead driver. Sometimes we would find a truck abandoned because of lack of gas or engine failure, but even these would be stripped to the frame. Though we used Korean drivers almost exclusively, not having enough troops to spare for trucking, we were sure, through our loyalty checks, that the drivers themselves were not doing the thieving. Yet we could get no line on the organization behind the kidnaping, murders, and thefts.

Then one night when I was working late, not only because I had a lot of work to do but also because the City Hall was heated and my hotel wasn't, we got our break. Capt. Cosson was with me when a sergeant burst in without ceremony.

"They got my truck," he shouted. He thrust out a handful of torn-out wires. "But I've wrecked the ignition. It's just a couple of blocks down the street. When I tore these out they were still trying to push it away. Maybe we can catch them!"

He was still catching his breath when Cosson and I raced out of the room, Cosson to call out the guard, and I to round up as many of my Market Inspectors as might be around. Seconds later, led by the sergeant, we were racing into the labyrinth of crooked streets behind City Hall.

There were about ten of us, including my interpreter, when we plunged into a street some seven centuries old, and smelling its age. Here there were no electric lights, or if they had been there, they were since wrecked. Only the glow of joss sticks, planted in every doorway to warn off evil spirits, guided us between the jumble of huts that seemed ready to bulge over and tumble into the stinking gutters.

So dark was it that we almost banged into the rear of the truck at full tilt. We would have, had not an enlisted man collided with a sack of rice first. The sack was on the shoulder of a bandit who was racing through the blackness, carrying his 150-pound burden as though it were a baton in a relay race. Both men went down with loud gasps for breath. Our element of surprise was gone.

"Lights!" I shouted.

Instantly a half-dozen flashlights cut sharp holes through the solid darkness. The truck emerged in sharp relief, and beyond that we could see a score of sack-laden figures scattering for as many doorways in the walls of the street.

I put Capt. Cosson in charge of the pursuit, while I turned with my interpreter to question the man who had been bowled over in the darkness. I turned my light on him. He was still gasping from the impact of the collision, but the instant the light hit him he struggled to squat on his haunches, neck outthrust, as though fully expecting to be beheaded by a sword blow.

He was dressed in the full uniform of a Boy Scout.

I fired a barrage of questions at our prisoner, and my interpreter translated in a voice that had sparks in it. We got no answer. Suddenly my interpreter lashed out with such a torrent of spiteful sounds that even I started. At its conclusion the overwhelmed prisoner fell on his face and began bawling a complete confession.



The truck emerged in sharp relief, and we could see a score of sack-laden figures scattering for doorways. In the investigation that followed, we uncovered an army of nearly 6,000 handits, organized hy Kim Koo to take over Seoul whenever the wily old assassin gave the word.

"We are in luck, sir," my interpreter said. "This boy says the gang's warehouse is only a couple of blocks from here."

"But what did you say to him?" I asked. "What made him talk all of a sudden?"

"I told him you were the high-muck-a-muck around here, the great and omnipotent mayor of Seoul in person," the sergeant replied. "I told him you had eyes that could strike him dead at a glance." Then he added with some contempt, "These guys have been under the Japs for so long they'll believe anything, but as long as it works I guess we shouldn't squawk."

My men were returning. The bandits, familiar with the twists and turns of the dark alleys, had made good their escape despite their heavy loads of rice. I now outlined to Capt. Cosson my plans for a raid on the warehouse, the whereabouts of which had been revealed by our prisoner.

Capt. Cosson was to take one detail and rush the front of the building. I was to take the other and rush the back, the signal being a blast on my whistle.

To preserve some element of surprise, we decided to keep to the back alleys in making our way to the warehouse. This was something of a mistake. So dark was it that we couldn't find the alleys that led in the right direction, and, in the darkness, I lost most of my detail. By the time we reached the rear of the warehouse, only my interpreter remained with me.

There was nothing for it but to raid anyway. I blew my whistle, fired a couple of pistol shots into the ground, and drove for the back door. Just as I reached it, it burst open, nearly bowling me over. Out they poured.

The light was behind them. They couldn't see me, but I could see them. I put out my foot, and two fell over it. Then I began chopping at heads with my pistol butt. I swung and connected, swung again and connected. Now they were really coming. Behind me rose a shrill wailing, and suddenly the men jamming through the door stopped cold and clasped their hands over the backs of their necks. The men already outside and still conscious squatted on their haunches, their hands also clasped over their necks. No one moved.

My interpreter came up grinning. "Your Imperial Highness, the exalted mayor of Seoul, has done it again," he said. "Your name packs almost as much wallop as your forty-five." He looked at the two men I had clouted. "And that's some wallop."



"All right, George, so I made a mistake. . . . Now come in and eat your supper."

Capt. Cosson's men had made a clean sweep through the front of the warehouse. In a matter of minutes we had some thirty bandits rounded up under the lights inside, a couple of them groggily rubbing their heads. It was a good night's work.

In the investigation that followed, we uncovered a tightly organized army of nearly 6000 bandits. Their uniformed leaders all masqueraded under the guise of Scoutmasters, and their meeting- and drilling-places were in the halls we had designated as neighborhood Scouting centers. Already they were well equipped with weapons that had been abandoned by the retiring Jap army. We thought our own troops had seized most of those weapons, but these boys had moved much faster than we suspected at the time. All they were waiting for, we quickly learned, was the word from Kim Koo to rise up and seize the city in his name.

But we were not able to pin that one on the wily old assassin. The biggest man in the organization we could catch was Um Hang Sup, Kim Koo's executive secretary and the official Boy Scout leader of Seoul. Um Hang Sup had been with Kim Koo in China for years, and had always worked hand-in-glove with him, but as Kim Koo pointed out politely, if Sup wanted to organize an army on his own, that was not his, Koo's, responsibility.

"Many men trying to raise armies," he said blandly. "You blame Kim Koo for all armies?"

He was right, of course. All over Seoul were men aspiring to political power. The man with the biggest army would get the most votes, or know the reason why. All told, we uncovered and broke up 67 such armies, some numbering a thousand men and more. Many had been organized by the Reds who had slipped into Seoul disguised as refugees. These had as their sole objective not the organization of a Communistic party but the disruption by bullying tactics of all the legitimate political parties.

Kim Koo now realized that we were not as stupid as he had at first thought. Accordingly, he publicly declared himself in support of the American policies of occupation, and retired quietly to his stolen villa. We did not disturb him there. Like Syngman Rhee, he was to the people a hero of legendary importance. To clap him in jail might arouse a lot of antagonism, and we were having enough trouble without adding that to our burdens. As long as he was co-operating, however passively, we decided to leave him alone, but under surveillance. No matter what we might think of his methods, we still believed him to be a

genuine patriot, acting for Korea's good in his own weird fashion. How were we to know—

If there were scores of selfish persons seeking political power, there were also some real patriots emerging from the crowd. One of these was Dr. Song Il Chung, a scholar who stood head and shoulders above all possible rivals, one we were grooming for a top spot in the national administration, a fact which did not escape the attention of Kim Koo. One night Dr. Chung was called to his door to receive a message. He received it—the full load from a tommy-gun—and with his life paid part of the price of freedom.

Our police, getting better trained every day, were so close on the trail of the killers this time that Kim Koo was nearly forced to show his hand to save them. It was one of his cars that whisked the hatchet men through our guard at the 38th Parallel and into the Russian zone. "Stolen," he explained —and we couldn't prove otherwise.

I won't go into the details of all the efforts made by the Reds to render our administration chaotic. They flooded our country with counterfeit money to inflate our currency. They sent in more than a quarter of a ton of opium to be distributed free, hoping to cripple us with a new outbreak of opium addiction. Fortunately their agent, a Jap collaborator named Tiger Ahn, could not stand the thought of giving away free something that had a ready cash value. He tried to sell the opium to the highest bidder, and we nailed him when one of our own agents made the highest bid.

And they committed many, many murders. The bodies of their victims would be found on the streets in the morning. One street outside the Chinese quarter, not far from City Hall, became the dumping-ground for so many bodies that the soldiers came to call it Body Boulevard. Another corner bore the unlovely title of Cadaver Crossroads. Though it was an easy matter for our patrols to pick up the innocent parties carrying out the bodies for disposal, it was months before we could get our hands on the terrorists behind the killings. But get them we did.

THEN abruptly, almost out of a clear sky, I was confronted with a fully-developed Communist Party demanding equal rights with the other democratic political parties that were rapidly springing to healthy life. I had the City Hall running smoothly. Koreans were rapidly developing an ability for self-government under the training of my officers and men, and everything looked good. Then came word that the Commies were going to stage city-wide riots, demanding the return of Korea to Koreans, on October 16th, 1946. The signal for the riots to start, I learned, was to be the sounding of the air-raid siren atop City Hall at 12 noon. In this city of few clocks and almost no watches, the siren was the big time-synchronizer for everybody.

During the morning set for the riots, the Commie bullies began gathering on all important street-corners, ready for the signal that would send them into the streets to overturn cars, buses and street cars. Few of my police were in evidence. I knew another trick, however:

At noon I simply did not sound the siren.

The Commies didn't know what to do. They had no original thinking. Without a signal, they could not start. Little knots of civilians gathered around them as word spread through the city of the joke. For weeks the mention of the noon siren was enough to start a laugh in any crowd.

By now I was curious to learn from whence had sprung this Commie organization. It was too pat, too smoothly operating to be the product of the Commie agitators who had slipped in with the refugees.

Again the trail led to Kim Koo. Not a clearly defined trail, to be sure. Kim Koo was too smart for that. But he was the only one in Seoul with a gang of hatchet men big enough to enforce, by terror if necessary, the dictates of the Communists. And I began to see the truth, even if the evidence did not confirm it.

Kim Koo had sold out to the Commies. Realizing at last that he was not powerful enough to drive out the Americans, he had joined hands with the power he thought could do it. By selling out to the Reds, he hoped to bring about a revolution that would sweep him into control. Gone were my illusions of him as a patriot.

At the reverses suffered by the Commies in their planned riots and rallies, he must have gone crazy with rage. In quick succession he murdered three prominent Koreans who had shown great talent in my city administration. Or, I should say, he gave the orders that led to their murders.

But my police were ready. Our crime laboratory was in full operation. Our roadblocks were tight. We rounded up fourteen men involved in the atrocities, convicted them in fair trials, and hung them all. None betrayed Kim Koo, who retired in silence to lick his wounds. According to the terms of occupation, we were to withdraw from Korea in 1948. He would wait until then.

True to our word, we did withdraw from Korea when our occupation period was up. The Russians did not. But in our three years we had built well. We had, through our school system, reduced the illiteracy rate from 85 per cent to 15 per cent. We had wiped out corruption in the local and national government, and left behind an administrative body of Koreans fully capable of carrying on in the name of freedom. The people, most of them for the first time in their lives, were self-respecting, self-supporting, and happy.

All but Kim Koo and his henchmen. More and more Kim Koo kept slipping over the border to confer with the Reds. A few men in my old constabulary watched with growing uneasiness. They knew what Kim Koo was doing, but they had no proof. All the evidence of a sell-out was in the hands of the Reds beyond the 38th Parallel. It was the old story. For fifty years Kim Koo had been selling out the Koreans, but never was there any proof.

A YOUNG man named Lieutenant Ahn took to brooding about Kim Koo and the blot upon his family's honor. One night in February, 1950, Kim Koo returned from North Korea, where the plans for the attack upon the South Koreans were already being drawn up, to find that he had a caller. A young man, he was informed, wished to see him on a matter of utmost importance.

Kim Koo ordered that the young man be admitted, but indicated that his bodyguard remain.

As I got the report later from my former chief of police, Lieutenant Ahn entered the room, and brushed swiftly past the burly hatchet men who stood between him and Kim Koo.

"You are a traitor," he said to the assassin. "Tonight you pay for all your crimes."

With that he whipped out his .45 and opened fire.

So Kim Koo was not on hand when the North Koreans pulled their sneak attack upon Seoul. But some of his henchmen were there to taste the glory Kim Koo had planned for himself. Led now by "Scoutmaster" Um Hang Sup, they met the Reds and were rewarded with the top jobs in the country. But their hour of glory was brief. Too late they learned that Kim Koo, in double-crossing the South Koreans, had pulled the greatest double-cross of all upon himself and his gang. He had sold out to the wrong party. It was only a matter of weeks, and the United Nations troops were back in Seoul.

Then sank home the final truth. Democracy in action is bigger than assassins, bigger than private armies, bigger than Communism and the pattern for chaos it stands for. It is the biggest thing in the world today. So much did Kim Koo learn, too late, and so much have his gangsters learned since, also too late. I wonder where they are now—if they are. •

BONE OF CONTENTION

A SHORT SHORT STORY
COMPLETE ON THESE TWO PAGES

• By JOE COOGAN

Harold was the only <u>animal</u> animal-doctor in the country, and we could have cleaned up if he hadn't taken those long walks.

"It's the truth," said my grandfather. "If it hadn't been for one stubborn gorilla, I'd be President of the United States today."

"I don't believe it," I said.

"You're young, Stevie. Lots of things happen you wouldn't believe. It never occurred to you, I bet, that an orangutan could rope cattle."

"Sure it did," I lied.

"His name was Harold," my grandfather said. "Ran into him around 1900 in Foul Mouth, South Dakota. Town had been settled by a lot of retired whalin' men. More cursin' and swearin' in one block than in this whole city of Philadelphia—easily."

"Were you a cowboy?" I asked.

"Not at the time," he admitted. "I was the community's animal-doctor. Before I was forced to leave town, the name Pat Leary was more famous than Louis Pasteur's." He sighed. "Harold was my last patient."

"What was wrong with him?"

"Same thing that became wrong with the whole town: A man named Roger Cartwright. Reformer type. Thought he was God Almighty. Did some good at first. Got us a railroad and a church. But he became drunk

with power. Organized a lodge—*The Servants of the Stars and Stripes*—a fierce, virtuous bunch that met once a month to deplore things. Harold and me were two of the things they deplored.

"I was Harold's owner then, as much as anybody could be said to own him. He originally belonged to an old sea captain who had picked him up in the Pacific and kept him on as ship's mascot. One night in Brogan's Courtesy Saloon the captain got involved in a discussion concerning the color of a hole card and decided to leave abruptly. I was at the bar when it happened, in a contest to see who could drink the most—er—sa'sparilla without takin' a breath. Harold was watchin' us close and didn't even see the captain leave. He didn't care much anyways. Bein' an enlisted man, as you might say, he had no great love for the captain. Well, sir, I had just about won the contest when the ape reaches out, grabs a drink and drains it in one gulp. I accepted the challenge. . . . Later that night, that big orangutan carried me home like a baby. We were pals from then on.

"I DID my doctorin' at Brogan's and Harold became my assistant. He was impressive-lookin'—five feet ten, four hundred pounds, with a wide good-natured face and a little sailor's cap perched on his head—but he was too giddy to be much help. Spent most of his time sprawled on a chair, daydreaming, but he was quick enough to take a bow if an operation was a big success. I didn't mind, though: he was the only *animal* animal-doctor in the country and we could have cleaned up if he hadn't clashed with Roger Cartwright.

"Harold was easy-goin' but he brooded a lot. Apes need more exercise than most people and the vet business is pretty sedentary. That's why he started the cattle-roping. But sailors don't make good horsemen and his heart wasn't in it. He tried takin' long hikes but them wild canyons out there's nothin' like a jungle and besides most of Harold's walkin' had been confined to the inside of a ship. One day he got to daydreamin' out there and couldn't find his way back for a week. He brooded all day after that, and our doctorin' business began to suffer.

"Then he discovered Cartwright started his day with a long stroll. Harold was overjoyed. He stalked Cartwright with that slow, rollin' walk of his which looked mean but was only natural considerin' his ancestry and previous profession. Cartwright got sore as heck, especially when Harold began imitatin' his prissy, mincing steps. People would line up the street waitin' for them to go by. Harold didn't care; he liked crowds and followin' Cartwright gave him exercise, direction and amusement at the same time.

"In three weeks the thing came to a head. I was in Brogan's treating a prize cow for tonsilitis while Harold was lallygaggin' around with Cartwright when Titus Wilson, the town undertaker and Cartwright's sidekick, marches in like a one-man parade.

" 'Leary,' he says, 'I am here to deliver a warnin'!'

" 'Can't you see I'm ministerin' to the sick?' I says.

" 'Performin' illegal operations, Mr. Cartwright calls it,' he says.

I almost dropped the cow.

" 'So we members of the lodge,' he says, 'have decided that you and Harold are a disgrace to this town and both of you could be sent to jail for practicin' medicine without a license.'

" 'We can take care of ourselves,' I said, real short.

"Well, maybe we could, but we didn't get a chance to try. The next morning after Harold and Cartwright left, the hurriphoon started. The hurriphoon was a combination typhoon and hurricane that plagued that part of the West. Wasn't so much a strong wind as a sharp one. Been known to slice through rocks and strip the skin off cattle. But this wasn't a real bad hurriphoon and I thought Cartwright and Harold had plenty of time to find shelter. I was wrong. Neither of them came back that night.

"The next day they sent out searching-parties. I was in Brogan's when Titus Wilson came in, lookin' flushed and embarrassed.

" 'Is it all over?' I asked him.

" 'All over,' he says. 'Hit by the train ten miles out. It was a great loss. He was a noble being—a symbol of strength and purity.'

" 'That's nice of you,' I says. 'Harold was strong all right, but not much for purity.'

" 'I'm referrin' to Mr. Cartwright,' he says.

" 'You mean the ape's all right?' I ask.

" 'The train got both of them,' he says and handed me a torn sailor hat. 'We found this on the track,' he says. He cleared his throat. 'And we'd appreciate it, Mr. Leary, if you'd go out and pick up your ape.'

" 'Glad to,' I says.

" 'It isn't as easy as it sounds,' Wilson says. 'What with the train and the hurriphoon there's nothin' left but bones. It's hard to tell them apart. As Hereditary Grand Regent of the Lodge I intend to bury Mr. Cartwright with full honors. We could hardly confer the same dignity on your ape.'

" 'Harold deserves the best,' I says.

" 'Be reasonable,' Wilson says. 'Harold wasn't even a member of the Lodge.'

"That sounded fair, so I hiked out with him to the scene of the disaster. When we arrived we saw what looked like pieces of driftwood piled near the edge of the track. I leaned over and picked one up. 'Man bone,' I says and put it on my right. I picked up another. 'Ape bone,' I says. I could hardly see for tears. Wilson put the pile on the right in a fancy mahogany box. I was too grief-stricken to protest when he threw the ape bones in a gully.

"The next day when *The Servants of the Stars and Stripes* marched slowly down the main street I was with them, sittin' in a big black barouche with Titus Wilson and the town council. Wilson congratulated me after the ceremony.

" 'You saved us a great deal of embarrassment, Mr. Leary,' he says, 'and we're grateful. Like to have you drop in at the Lodge meetin' next week.'

"Well, that started it. After a few meetin's I changed my mind about the Lodge. They changed their minds about me too. In four weeks they elected me Grand High Regent and wanted to put me up for State Legislature. It was only a step from there to Governor and then to President. But the whole thing blew up the day I got the watch."

He pulled out his large silver pocket-watch with the picture of a locomotive and the words *"Twenty Years of Service"* on it.

"Railroad gave this to me. Claimed my work at the track saved them twenty years of law-suits. I can remember now the day the ceremony took place. It was a bright beautiful day—a day to make a hermit dance."

He sighed and put the watch back in his pocket. "It was the day that Harold came back. The train and the hurriphoon had missed him, but without Cartwright it took him a month to find his way home."

"WHAT finally happened to Harold?" I asked.

"Don't know," my grandfather said. "I moved from Foul Mouth shortly after that and I lost track of him. Some people say, though, that that ape today, under an assumed name, is one of the most brilliant, respected and silent vet'inarian surgeons in the Midwest. But I doubt it; Harold was too light-headed to buckle down to serious work."

He stood up and stretched. "Yes, sir, could have been President today," he said, "but everything happens for the best. It's not my kind of job. I never could've stood that lyin' crowd of politicians a man would have to put up with." •



The Set-up

The easy victories, plus the drinks, had set Jordan up for the kill. Too late, he realized a man's whole life could depend on the flight of a golf ball.

By WILLIAM HOLDER

Illustration by BILL FLEMING

JORDAN WALKED UP TO THE HOTEL TERRACE after the first nine and sat at an umbrella-covered table. It was hot out there on the course and Fletcher had wanted to change his shirt. Jordan didn't mind the break. A breeze came off the sun-speckled sea, and behind him loomed the huge crescent of the hotel, a faithful reproduction of the illustrations he and Paula had seen in the travel catalogues. Cloud Key was a beautiful place; yet they should never have come here.

But that was stupid reasoning, he knew. Like saying you'd never have scraped the fender against the garage door if you hadn't bought the car. There was nothing wrong with Cloud Key. The big trouble was that he hadn't kept his mouth shut in the locker-room yesterday, when the others had started talking fancy figures.

He ordered a glass of milk and a sandwich, but when they arrived he found he had no appetite for them. He was sick about the whole thing.

Someone took the chair beside him and said, "And now that the needle is well inserted, they'll press the plunger."

Jordan looked up; the speaker was Mr. Morrow. "You saw the first nine?" Jordan asked.

Mr. Morrow nodded. He was a man in his early fifties, bald except for a trimmed hedge of white hair that encircled the rear half of his tanned head. His eyes were blue and clear and direct, the mouth knowing and humorous. Paula, Jordan knew, had become very fond of Mr. Morrow during the week they had been here.

"I'm one up," Jordan said—it was a fact that puzzled him. "He made a couple of ragged shots out there."

"Fletcher hasn't got a bad shot in his bag except the ones he wants to make! They're still taking bets, aren't they?"

Jordan said, "That's right." The small gallery had been a very interested group, and he'd seen Nevins handling a lot of money. He said to Morrow, "You're really sure about this?" The question was unnecessary, because he was sure of it himself, now. He'd watched Fletcher, with the flawless swing, and he'd seen Nevins busily taking the various bets.

"As I told you, the man was kicked out of the Professional Golfers Association a dozen years ago. How old were you then, 15 or 16? He was one of the best, but they didn't want anything like him around. Eight or nine years ago I saw him take a friend of mine, Ed Hill, in Chicago. We didn't know what had happened until later."

Thirty-five hundred dollars, Jordan thought. *What in God's name was on my mind when I walked into that one?*

Morrow lit a thin cigar. "Why don't you haul out? You know now what the set-up is."

"Haul out?" Jordan said. "And Nevins with the money in his pocket! That'd do me a lot of good." Nevins had accomplished it very nicely, too. An efficient man, Nevins.

He saw Paula approaching across the terrace, and wondered how he could ever explain this thing to her when it was finished. She was lovely in a new coral sun-dress, her arms and shoulders tan, her blonde hair piled atop her head. She said a pretty hello to Morrow, then kissed Jordan on his sunburned nose. "A pause in the day's labors?"

He nodded, enjoying the sight of her, then remembering how long they had saved for this trip. "A guy is changing his shirt." She knew nothing about Fletcher or the nature of this match.

She grinned. "I'm having myself a time. This business of being a rich woman has its points. You walk into a shop, say, 'Give me that,' and sign your name. You can't beat it."

"They do say it's nice," Jordan said. Two nights before, working on a twenty-dollar bill, Paula had won herself fifteen hundred dollars at the roulette wheel in the Casino. It was now in Nevins' pocket, along with more money and a check.

What would she say when he broke the news to her about that? What would she say tomorrow, when he told her they'd have to leave Cloud Key immediately, their first vacation in five years over and finished, because he'd had a couple of drinks too many and hadn't been able to keep his mouth shut when people had started to talk big money? If he got home with more than eight dollars it would surprise him, and there would be nothing, absolutely nothing, left in the bank. He'd gone for the works.

But she didn't know about that now, and she patted him on the cheek and smiled. "Get out there this afternoon and win your wife some more money. This is fun. I'll see you later."

Jordan watched her walk away on long slim legs, and realized more fully the extent of the disaster. For years they'd worked hard for this vacation, and for everything else they had, and now he'd thrown it down the drain in a moment of vanity and stupidity.

"They hustled you," Morrow said. "This is a classy outdoor poolroom as far as they're concerned. This last nine will show you the difference between a good club player and a pro. You'll be gunning for pars, but Fletcher'll be shooting for birdies."

"So what can I do?"

Morrow rolled the cigar in his fingers and shook his head. "Not a thing. You're just taking a very expensive golf lesson. I guess you just watch Fletcher and try to learn something. You might ask him for advice on your short irons."

Jordan knew it was the man's manner of extending his sympathy, of making him feel less like a fool. He said, "I'll do that."

Fletcher emerged from the clubhouse—a man who was tall and lean and easy-moving, perhaps 42 or 43, with black hair topping a good-looking, weathered face. You had to admire him, in a way, Jordan thought. He was not only a fine golfer but a capable actor. It was a precarious way of making a living, and only a man with unusual poise would dare attempt it. He had to be good but not too good, restrained but affable in his relations with the victim. The delicacy of his play had to be incredible, for a stroke here, another there, would make all the difference between success and failure. The crowning touch, of course, was to leave the sucker without any idea of what had happened to him. There could be no room for recrimination, no suggestion of swindle. It was a hell of a job, if you did it right.

Fletcher smiled and asked quietly, "All set?"

Jordan got to his feet. "All set for the kill," he said, and was aware of Fletcher's eyes hitting him hard and searchingly for a moment, before the smile came back. They strolled back to the course.

Fletcher raised a hand, forefinger pointing to the tee. "We've got quite a crowd with us."

Jordan nodded. "Maybe they'll learn something. They're getting a lesson for free—some of them."

Fletcher looked at him again. "You've got something there. A golf clinic!"

And waiting for them, a bit apart from the small crowd, was Joe Nevins, the thin man who for three days had been a new friend and was now revealed as a fraud. Nevins was 50, perhaps, and what had seemed to be intelligence and tolerance in his eyes Jordan now knew to be shrewdness and cynicism.

Sam Taylor was there, too, a fat and jolly man, Jordan's partner in the three days of the build-up, when they had beaten Fletcher and Nevins in three close matches. On the first day the bets had been gentle, on the second they had risen steeply, on the third they had been really big. Only the fact that Jordan had won each day had enabled him with conscience to play on the next. He had won seven hundred dollars.

And on that third day—only yesterday, Jordan suddenly thought with surprise—when the match was finished and the bets had been paid, there had been the usual small party in the locker-room. Jordan had never won seven hundred dollars in his life before, and he was pleasantly confused about it. When Nevins and Taylor had kidded each other sufficiently about their respective, atrocious games, they had started talking with money.

More than a little muddled by the fine whisky, and exhilarated by the fortunes of the day and the warm good-fellowship, Jordan had jumped aboard the jolly merry-go-round. It was arranged that he and Fletcher, representing the best qualities of each team, should play a match alone, unhindered by their hacking partners.

And when the music had stopped, Jordan had been astonished and sobered by the discovery that not only had he thrown into the pot every penny he possessed, he also had gambled away his own self-respect and his wife's respect for him.

And now Taylor beamed happily. "Another day, another dollar, son! Get out there and make me rich."

He was a wealthy man, Jordan knew, and a thoroughly nice person. "Still betting, Mr. Taylor?" And he knew Nevins and Fletcher would be getting real money out of this man.

Taylor chuckled. "Just talked Nevins into another thousand, but I had to give him a price, since you're one up."

That Nevins. Odds, he was getting! "Maybe you ought to lay off, Mr. Taylor. I don't feel so well. You never know what can happen." Jordan tried to lend some tonal signifi-

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HONEYMOON— FOURTH QUARTER

As the honeymoon draws to an end,
Her cute little ways show this trend:
Less of divinity—
More asininity.

—W. W. Hatfield

cance to his words. How could he warn off a fellow slob?

And then another thought hit him as solidly as if someone had kicked him in the stomach. He couldn't possibly intimate to Taylor that this thing was framed! For if Taylor were the least bit suspicious when the match came to its inevitable conclusion, what would prevent the man from linking him, Jordan, with the other two? Who was there to say that he had not known Fletcher and Nevins previously and conspired with them?

He said weakly, "Didn't sleep so well."

Taylor looked at him, then laughed again. "You look as if you'll last another nine holes, boy. Get up there and hit one."

Jordan did. He bottled his anger and his shame, and laced one out, far away and down the middle. Then he watched as Fletcher hit one with that perfect swing, the power fully unleashed now. It was directly in the middle of the fairway and thirty yards beyond Jordan's ball. Now they were beginning to take off the wraps.

But they halved the par-five hole. Nevins walked the fairway with Fletcher, and Jordan knew what went on between them as positively as if he'd been listening. There was still some loose money around, and Jordan could detect the lack of punch in the shot as Fletcher was strangely short with his second. They both took two putts and Fletcher grinned amiably enough. "Don't you ever make mistakes?"

"Big ones," Jordan said. "Just the big ones."

The eleventh was a short hole. Jordan was on, thirty feet away. Fletcher hit his shot with care and the ball came to rest two feet from the pin. He dropped it for the birdie, and the match was square.

Walking beside Jordan, Morrow said, "And here we go, my lad."

The twelfth was a par-four dogleg, and Fletcher played it straight down the middle. His ball came to rest beyond the clump of trees that formed the angle of the hole, leaving him a clear approach. Jordan took a long chance and played over the trees. His drive was strong, with just enough loft, and it carried all the way to the apron. Fletcher looked at him and the grin wasn't there, now. He was on with his second, but Jordan laid one right up there near the cup and sank the putt, and he was ahead again.

It was luck, Jordan knew, and it wouldn't last. He was a good weekend golfer, with a five handicap, but he was playing against one of the best in the game. There was an assurance, a certainty, about each of Fletcher's shots that came only from years of concentrated effort, and which Jordan, under the circumstances, could never hope to achieve. Fletcher's clubs were each a part of him, graduated extensions of his will. No lie was strange to him, because, for more than twenty years, he had daily hit golf balls from every conceivable conformation of dirt and grass and sand. Complex as the game was, he had upon numberless occasions encountered every problem it could present, and had equipped himself with the means to deal with them. He was one of the master workmen of his craft.

He took the thirteenth with a drive that carried fully 275 yards and an iron that left him a putt of eight feet, which he sank.

The gallery had grown to thirty or forty people now, and Jordan saw Nevins glance at Fletcher and briefly shake his head. There was money in the crowd and the kill was not to be hurried. The excitement had built up to a heady pitch, and these were moneyed, betting people, as Jordan had observed in the Casino at night. Here was another, different kick for them, and their hands went to their pockets automatically. Nevins appreciated the psychological richness of the movement.

And on the fourteenth, an easy par four, Fletcher's tee shot faded into the light rough. The man cursed without conviction and Jordan halved the hole with him.

He felt none of the tension that gripped the crowd, but he knew a growing anger. He had been aware now for a long time just how the match would end, and he'd kissed his money good-by. Within himself he had experienced the shame of talking to Paula, and had endured the embarrassment of their immediate departure, and the bitterness of the months ahead. All he wanted now was a finish to the thing. It galled him to be toyed with in addition to being robbed. His objective appraisal of Fletcher as an iron-nerved and slightly romantic figure had undergone a change. He knew the man now for what he was, a thief who wielded a golf club rather than a blackjack, and who exercised a subtle form of blackmail as insurance against disclosure.

Jordan took the fifteenth with a long drive and a screaming brassie that put him hole high and fifteen feet off the pin. He was relaxed in his disgust, and his anger added whip to his wrists. Fletcher matched both his shots and was left a six-foot putt. Jordan examined his lie and rammed the putt home with careless authority. Fletcher took his time, stroked carefully, and the ball hung on the lip of the cup and would not fall.

They went to the sixteenth tee and Morrow, walking beside Jordan, said, "They're drawing it awfully fine. They had no intention of losing that one. If I were they I'd be starting to sweat just a little bit."

The sixteenth was a long par four. Jordan drove well enough; then Fletcher stepped up. His mouth was a thin line in his face now, and looking at him, Jordan knew that the gates were closing. The man drove, a perfect picture of grace and power, and the ball came to rest in the middle of the fairway as an involuntary shout went up from the gallery. It was fully 300 yards out! His second was a seven iron that dropped dead four feet from the pin. Jordan might just as well have been sitting back on the terrace. He took a five to the other man's three and they were squared again.

The seventeenth was a par five, and Jordan made a fine tee shot, twenty yards short of Fletcher's drive. He lashed into the second with the brassie, and knew immediately that it had everything—one of those once-a-year shots. The ball hugged the ground, then rose without haste and seemed to go on forever. It hit the green and stopped twenty feet from the pin.

Then Fletcher made his only unintentional bad shot in four days, a Number Three wood that hooked on him and left him short and wide in a patch of heavy, hummocked grass. Jordan saw the man's face pale under the tan and within himself there was a sudden fierce surge of hope.

They walked to Fletcher's ball. It was almost embedded in the sandy base of a tough clump of grass that rose directly between the ball and the pin. Nevins approached Fletcher, his mouth opened to speak, but the big man said, "Shut up!" He stood there examining the lie.

And now Jordan, for the first time, felt the terrible pressure. It filled his chest and throat and he wanted to shout to relieve it. If he took this hole, and it seemed he couldn't miss, he had only to halve the eighteenth. With a little luck he could do that, and instead of losing all that money, why, he would—

Fletcher made his shot. It was necessarily angled and put him far out on the apron of the green. He was still away, and he walked to the ball silently. He eyed the green for fully two minutes, then lofted the ball gently with his iron. It stopped two feet from the cup.

He walked close to Jordan and said softly, "You want to be careful here, Mac. You could choke on that lump in your throat. All that dough!"

Jordan fought the nervousness, the unbearable tension. His first putt

was too strong, the ball racing six feet past the cup. He looked at it in a daze, struggling against cold panic. He walked up and putted again, gently. . Too gently—the ball stopped a foot short.

Fletcher grinned at him, stepped and dropped his two-footer, then stood there smiling, shaking his head. Jordan could hardly see the ball at his feet. He stroked it fearfully and was almost surprised to see it trickle hesitantly into the cup.

Three putts for a five, and a half on the hole, and the miraculous chance thrown away! He'd had it right there, in the palm of his hand, but the pressure had been too much for him to handle.

He made his way to the last tee through the murmurs of the crowd. He glanced up and saw Sam Taylor, looking at him with a puzzled expression on his face. Something else to worry about!

Morrow walked beside him. Jordan said, "Nice, wasn't it?"

Morrow frowned. "I've seen the big ones blow a set-up like that. Fletcher helped with his little remarks, didn't he?"

Jordan shrugged. "He plays it all the way." He felt himself strangely empty of feeling about the entire thing. Never before had he been under such pressure, and the apparent truth seemed to be that his nerves were not conditioned to take such a beating. The thing would run on, now, until Fletcher's superior ability won him a hole. Jordan knew that the other man would make no more mistakes.

The eighteenth was unusual for a home hole in that it was a short par three, with a negligible bit of fairway. The green was raised and heavily trapped, and beyond it was an acre of jagged coral that protected it from the ocean. There was a strong breeze blowing in irregular puffs from the sea.

Jordan watched as Fletcher selected an iron from his bag and stepped onto the tee. The man faced into the wind, testing its strength and irregularity, then took his stance.

Jordan was astonished to hear a voice next to him say loudly, "Do you remember Ed Hill in Chicago, Fletcher?" It was Morrow.

Fletcher turned, a frown on his face, his eyes searching for the owner of the voice and not finding him. He addressed the ball again, and it seemed to Jordan that his grip on the club was tighter, white-knuckled. He eyed the green just once, then made his shot.

At the top of his backswing, Morrow said again, loudly enough for Fletcher to hear, "Ed Hill."

Fletcher's club came down and he hit the ball cleanly. Jordan watched its flight, low into the wind, straight and true. . . . And about twenty yards too long. It barely cleared the green and then bounced high and crazily three times on the broken stumps of coral.

Jordan knew what had happened. Fletcher's nerve had not faltered, but Morrow had succeeded in distracting his attention for that necessary split second. The line of concentration had been broken for as long as it would take a man to snap his fingers, but that, and the variable wind, had been enough to affect the delicacy of the shot.

Jordan felt a sudden terrific urge to laugh, and he could not suppress a smile as he turned to Morrow. "You know, of course, that your behavior is highly unethical."

"I wouldn't worry about it too much if I were you," said the bald man. "Just get on that green."

Jordan went over to the tee, and Fletcher's eyes held murder in them. He said, "All right, sucker. Put one in the same place and we can both play the tee shots again."

Jordan couldn't get rid of the grin as he answered the man shortly and profanely. The wind held strong and steady for him as he hit into the ball sharply. His entire being was concentrated on the shot and he was only vaguely aware of Fletcher's cough. He had been through this only minutes before and was no longer a stranger to it. The ball described an even parabola and hit in the middle of the apron, then rolled to within fifteen feet of the pin.

He watched in impersonal admiration as Fletcher somehow managed to take only two strokes to get out of the coral, and while the man coldly and methodically holed a twenty-five-foot putt. He walked to his own ball, and that and the cup were the only things in the world. He putted smoothly and was three inches short. He stepped to the ball and with deliberation tapped it in.

He raised his head and Fletcher was there, his eyes deadly in an expressionless face. Jordan looked at him and knew a sudden disgust. He said, "How does it feel for a thief to have his pockets picked?"

For a moment he thought the man was going to swing at him with the putter he still held, and he would have welcomed the attempt. But Fletcher checked himself, and when he spoke his voice was flat and without emotion. "You're lucky, Mac. It's better than being smart. But don't run it too hard." He turned and walked away.

Nevins was off to one side of the green and Jordan went over. Sam Taylor was pocketing a roll of bills and laughing like a kid at a circus. He yelled, "Son, we sure gave it to them today, didn't we? See you later!"

Nevins' eyes were flat and cold in his pale face. Jordan said, "You'd better have enough there for me."

Nevins counted it out. Jordan's check was part of it and the amount was correct. Seven thousand dollars! Nevins didn't say a word, and turned to another bettor.

Jordan walked toward the terrace with Morrow. "I was wondering if they'd pay off." He was light in the feet now, feeling the nervous reaction in his knees. In his pocket, the money didn't feel any larger than a washing-machine.

"They've got to have it," Morrow said. "There's always the chance of an accident, like today. Some of these people—Taylor, for instance—carry a lot of weight. There'd be police and a big fuss, and I'll bet a dollar to a dime there are at least fifty swindled golfers here and there across the country who'd love to have a chat with those two." He puffed on his cigar. "What did it cost them—ten, twelve thousand? They'll have it back in a couple of weeks, as soon as they hit another spot." He looked at Jordan. "Feeling sorry for them?"

Jordan grinned. "My heart bleeds for the gentlemen." At a distant table he saw a spot of color that was Paula, in a different dress. She was waving to them, and Jordan said, "Come and have a drink. I need several. Your small aside to Mr. Fletcher merely saved my life." He touched the bundle in his pocket once again. "I feel like the First National Bank."

They sat down; Jordan ordered drinks. He looked at his wife and said, "It seems to me you get prettier by the hour. How would you like it if we stayed here a couple of extra weeks? It seems to agree with you."

She pantomimed a curtsy. "Thank you, kind sir. I do—" Then she stared at him. "What did you say?"

"A few weeks longer than we intended," Jordan said. He grinned at her. She knew exactly how much money they were supposed to have and how much it cost to stay here.

Her eyes were filled with a kindly suspicion. "Larry Jordan, just what were you doing this afternoon?"

"Mr. Morrow and I pulled a heist on an armored car."

She thumped a lovely hand on the table. "Tell me what this is all about."

The drinks came, and Jordan lifted his and grinned. "Sometime, baby—sometime. But not just now." He was still too close to it, still a little bit frightened. He tasted his drink and it was fine. •



GOT A LIGHT?

Fabulous facts about cigars and cigarettes

By JOHN T. DUNLAVY

It is thought that a gunner invented the first cigarette in 1832 when he and his battery mates discovered they had a plentiful supply of tobacco but no pipes. Moved by an urge familiar to all smokers, the artilleryman poured the gunpowder from a tissue-paper tube which was used for priming cannon, filled the paper with tobacco, and rolled his own. Either "cigarette" or "cigaret" is accepted as the correct spelling. One of the leading tobacco trade papers uses the latter.

Cigarettes were considered novelties and had little popularity in the U.S. until after the Civil War, following the introduction of Northern campaigners to flue-cured "makings" at Durham and other North Carolina markets. In 1870 chewing and pipe tobacco made up 79% of total sales; cigarette sales averaged only one-third of a cigarette per annum per capita. Not until after the first blended cigarette was marketed in 1910 did cigarettes become a major factor in the tobacco industry.

Today cigarette production requires nearly twice as much leaf tobacco as all other tobacco products combined. Last year, smokers in the United States spent $3,870,000,000 for 419.2 billion cigarettes, representing a per-capita consumption of nearly 3,000 cigarettes yearly for every man, woman and child in the country. Actually, the average smoker consumes a little more than a pack a day, so that 419.2 billion cigarettes are consumed by something like 55 million people—each, on the average, consuming about 7,500 cigarettes a year.

Among the fifty-five million smokers in this country, the average man consumes about 24 cigarettes a day. The average woman uses about 16 cigarettes per day. Since two out of every three men smoke and one of every three adult women smoke, it is estimated that about three-quarters of all cigarettes are smoked by men, and about one-quarter by women.

According to the annual report of Philip Morris, here is a typical breakdown of the retail selling price of a pack of cigarettes, using the 22c retail selling price in Peoria, Illinois as an example: The Federal Government takes 8c in excise taxes, 3c goes to the State in sales tax for a total of 11c in taxes. Then the jobber, dealer and retailer split 3.9c, leaving 7.1c, of which 5.2c goes for tobacco and other material costs and 0.6c for labor. Of the 1.3c balance, 0.7c is for income taxes, 0.4c is to stockholders and 0.2c is retained by the company for capital requirements.

The "lift" or "pick-up" of cigarettes is largely psychological. They do not aid digestion; have little or no effect on blood sugar; have but a slight narcotic effect on the nerves. As for helping you "relax," the effect is just the opposite. Smoking raises your blood pressure by causing a slight constriction of the arteries, so the heart must use more force to pump equal amounts of blood through the body. The rise is about 15% and persists for about a half hour. Smoking also increases your pulse rate about 15 to 25 beats a minute. This is roughly the equivalent of mild exercise such as climbing four or five flights of stairs.

We are smoking more than twice as much as we did prior to World War II. The per-capita consumption of cigarettes in 1940 was 1,219; as measured against the 1950 census, it was 2,883. Biggest current trend is to long cigarettes, with total production up 39.4% last year. "King-size" cigarettes now account for 49.5 billion or 11.8% of the total. In any length, out of each pack the average smoker throws away eight as butts.

Although there are over 40 brands of American cigarettes (how many can you name?), the big three account for 64.7% of the total. Apparently undisturbed by the rush to the popular brands, however, is a sizable group of smokers in the South and West. Those in this hardy group still roll their own at a clip of forty billion cigarettes a year.

How much does cigarette advertising cost you? Not even as much as the packaging: One-tenth of a cent to three-fifths of a cent per pack. Packaging is estimated at one cent per pack.

The three main classes of cigarette tobaccos grown in this country are air-cured types, flue-cured types, and fire-cured types. Air-cured tobaccos like Burley and Maryland comprise up to 40% of the tobacco in a cigarette. Flue-cured or "bright leaf" comprises up to 60% of the tobacco in a cigarette. Fire-cured tobaccos are darker in color and are not widely used in blended cigarettes. A typical blend formula for an American cigarette might be: flue-cured, 60%; Burley, 15%; Maryland, 10%; and Levantine (so-called Turkish) types, 15%.

Smoke from flue-cured tobacco is distinctively flavored and tends to be hot; Burley smoke is cooler and more bland; Levantine tobaccos are highly aromatic. Maryland is neutral in flavor and aroma and is used to speed burning. By blending these tobaccos, cigarette makers try to please the majority of smokers in the U.S. Blends, however, are not popular elsewhere. In England and Canada flue-cured tobaccos are favored, as is the case in the Orient. Our Central and South American neighbors prefer cigar types of tobaccos (fire-cured). Russia and near East countries prefer aromatic "Turkish" cigarettes.

Of much importance in determining the general taste characteristics in a cigarette are the flavoring materials. Yet for some reason or other, flavoring has been so little publicized that the average person doesn't even know tobacco is highly flavored. In cigarette manufacture a variety of flavoring formulas is used which may contain sugar, honey, essential oils, spices, brown sugar, cocoa, chocolate, licorice, ginger, cinnamon, tonka, vanilla, coumarin, molasses, rum, brandy, maple syrup, angelica, oil of anise, oil of juniper, oil of cloves, and many other agents.

The Bonsack cigarette machine was invented just after the Civil War and has been improved so that today machines are capable of producing up to 1600 cigarettes per minute. In normal operation they produce 600,000 cigarettes a day. Even wrapping is entirely mechanized, as the packing machines count and sort into even groups of 20, wrap in tinfoil, package, affix a Federal stamp on top of the pack (giving the Government from $6.90 to $8.40 per minute per machine), and seal them in cellophane at the rate of 120 packs per minute. ●

• by ELSIE LEE

DESERT WAIF

It is one thing to feel horror at watching a slave auction. It is something else again to try to do something about it.



We were sitting at the bar of the Hotel Majestic in Tunis. A good bit of the hotel had been bombed, but there was still a bar, and almost every night Tommy and Craig, Blakoe and I were in it. The place was foul with smoke and stale beer and sweat, but there wasn't any place else to go, so we'd become used to it.

Besides, the marble-topped tables made a good place for Tommy to practice rolling cigarettes one-handed—an accomplishment he was for some reason determined to master—and the management had no objection to the litter of papers Craig always left behind him.

"Got a pass this week-end," said Blakoe. "Wish to God I could think what to do with it."

Tommy laughed shortly. "Mysterious East!" he said contemptuously. "Nothing but sand and smells, and the women are so ugly they cover 'em up to fool the customers. Give me Chicago!"

"I'd like to get out into the desert," Blakoe cut him off. "See the country. It's terrible, but if we have luck we might hit a native wedding. Maybe we could knit up with some of the Air Force boys and fly round a bit."

"Sand," said Tommy grimly, beginning a fresh cigarette. Craig merely rolled his gum from left



to right, but every red hair on his head sat straight up at the word "fly."

"Nice clean sand," I said. "At least it won't smell."

A voice broke in from the next table—an oily voice, sly, insinuating. "You boys wan' see some native life?"

We looked around. The owner of the voice was as greasy and fat as he sounded. Swarthy, and dressed in French clothes that were a little too tight, he leaned toward us ingratiatingly, smiling with thick pink lips behind a beard cut in the French fashion. But I didn't think he was French.

"Yeah," said Blakoe, cautiously, "but we don't mean feelthy pictures."

"No, no," he said with eager affability. "I onnerstan'. You like to go out in the desert for a day, maybe? Drive in jeep to two-three towns, see native dance? I know just the fella."

I looked at Blakoe. He flicked an eyelid at the waiter. "You will permit?" he said courteously to the other table, and as the stranger bowed with a flash of his white teeth, he ordered, "A small Dubonnet for monsieur."

"Ah, *merci, monsieur le capitaine*," our neighbor murmured. "You permit that I introduce myself? I am Ali ben Sidi. My card," and with a ludicrous gesture obviously learned from an American salesman, he whipped out a huge French visiting card.

Blakoe politely acknowledged the introduction, mentioned our names briefly. I couldn't understand why he should suddenly be so affable. Usually Blakoe, who had traveled a lot before the war, avoided natives like the plague. "They think all Americans are made of gold," he would say, "and unless you speak the language and really know your way around, they treat you like fair game."

Which was just why we followed where Blakoe led: because he spoke excellent French and knew his way around. Otherwise, I guess we were an odd combination—red-headed Craig from a Vermont farm; Tommy, out of a Chicago meat-packing family, and me . . . the son of a minister.

Now, however, Blakoe was deep in conversation with Ali ben Sidi. In a corner a group of native musicians suddenly struck up a travesty of "Bell Bottom Trousers," and I couldn't follow what was going on. After a while, Blakoe announced that it was all arranged.

"This is the McCoy," he told us. "He's got a cousin, Ibrahim, who knows the desert well. If we provide the jeep, he'll take us out for a day. What do you say?"

We said yes, of course, and the deal was set for the week-end. On Friday morning we met at the hotel and a small neat figure in spotless white robes came forward. Ibrahim was completely different from his oily cousin. As much as I wouldn't have trusted Ali, I felt I'd rely on Ibrahim in a scrap.

Ibrahim singled out Blakoe at once and after a brief interchange of politenesses, we all climbed into the jeep and set off. It was about five in the morning, and Blakoe was driving, as usual, like a bat out of hell. The roads weren't very bad, and Ibrahim knew how to avoid the mined areas.

We scooted past dozens of olive orchards and wound through the usual little native towns. It wasn't too hot at that hour and aside from an argument with a herd of goats over who had the right of way, we didn't stop for anything.

It was breath-taking, all right. Behind us were roads, houses, animals, civilization. Before us lay—nothing. Just sand, shifting a little here and there. Clear, clean beige, in the slanting rays of morning sun. Unclouded blue sky above, and a glorified version of Palm Beach ahead of us, minus an ocean.

The sun was riding high above the desolate waste of sand by the time we had stopped for early lunch at a little oasis. How Ibrahim found his way across the dunes and valleys we never knew, but we hit two little desert towns on our way to the native market. They were exactly alike in architecture: built in the form of a square, with the houses facing inside on a big plaza and blank walls on the outside.

"They look like a fifth-rate medieval castle," Tommy remarked.

"But that is the meaning of 'sour'," Ibrahim said. "It is a castle of the desert."

Tommy was still preening himself on his imagination when we hit Sour Mafudi. Ibrahim said we'd better leave the jeep outside the wall. "There is only one gate to the marketplace, and the natives would be upset if you drove in," he advised. "Also—it will take less time for you to leave when you are ready."

For a moment I wondered if he thought there might be some sort of incident which would necessitate a hurried departure, but when we entered the marketplace, I understood.

Sour Mafudi was a typical desert town—and the most depressing little hole we'd ever seen. At that moment every available inch was thronged with natives, and where there weren't natives, there were camels and goats and dirty sheep. And dogs—everywhere there were flea-bitten yellow dogs, getting stepped on and pushed aside, or slinking under your feet to trip you up if you didn't keep your eyes open.

The only houses were in the walls of the town. The people lived on the ground floors—which just brought the smell out on a level with your nose—and up above were the storage houses, honeycomb-fashion with little uneven steps hung on the walls, going from one section to another. Ibrahim said the people kept grain and stuff in the upper sections deliberately so as to get some insulation from the sun.

It also weighted down the smell.

We worked our way around the sides of the marketplace. The heat on top of the beer—and that smell—made us all a little woozy, but Ibrahim kept us together and everyone seemed friendly, although reserved in the way that Arabs are.

We picked up some trinkets, and after a while we got down to the other end from the entrance. There were no stalls there, but only a sort of auction block, and an enormous mob of Arabs sitting placidly on squares of rug.

"Hey, stop a bit," Blakoe said. "This looks interesting."

"It's just a country auction," Craig said. "They have them in New England, too. You always wind up buying something you can't use. Come on, Blakoe. This heat's getting me."

"No," Blakoe insisted, his voice slightly slurred from too much beer. "I want to see it."

The first things that went up on the auction block were animals. Goats, and camels, and a few horses. There was a remarkable character acting as auctioneer. Naked to the waist, and dark as a copper penny, with a straggly beard and quite a gift of gab. Everyone sat on a square of rug and listened intently, and every so often they'd grin or chuckle. For an Arab, that's equivalent to a belly-laugh.

When they'd finished with the animals, there was a lot of chattering back and forth. People stood up and stretched, and it looked like intermission, but still Blakoe wouldn't move. After a while a girl was helped up beside the auctioneer.

She was small and veiled, and her robe was the usual thing resembling a sugar sack. She stood motionless and uncomplaining as the auctioneer babbled on, making jokes that the audience seemed to enjoy.

"What do you suppose is going on?" Craig asked, getting interested in spite of himself. "Some sort of show maybe?"

"Might be a magic act. Let's stay a minute and see what happens. She must be some sort of stooge for the auctioneer."

Illustrated by SIR ANTHONY

We settled back against the walls, on the outskirts of the crowd, and just then Ibrahim sidled up to us through the mob.

"What's going on?" Tommy asked him. "Who's the babe?"

"Who knows?" Ibrahim shrugged. "She is what she is. The second half of the auction is about to begin."

Blakoe looked puzzled. "What are they going to sell?"

Ibrahim looked surprised. "Her."

"Look," said Blakoe after a pause, "we don't understand. You mean she's going to sell something?"

"No. She will be sold—to the highest bidder."

Craig leaned forward. "You mean they have slavery here?"

"Not exactly," Ibrahim said. "She will be a servant. Or perhaps a wife."

"You mean, someone pays her so much to come and work for a year? Like the old indenture idea—and next year she hires out again?"

Ibrahim shook his head, his eyes suddenly veiled and withdrawn. "No. Her father sells her. She has no dowry, you see, so no one can marry her, and her father sells her for what he can get. If she is well trained, someone may buy her for a wife, but otherwise she'll be sold as a servant."

Tommy gulped. "Well, forevermore! How much can her father get for her?"

"Maybe 8000 or 10,000 francs."

"But the camels brought 60,000 francs," Craig objected.

Ibrahim shrugged. "Camels are very valuable," he said.

Hoarsely the auctioneer shouted the Arabic equivalent of "What am I bid?" There was a long spiel—perhaps he was cataloguing her good points—but the bidding seemed desultory. A voice from the far side of the plaza said "4000 francs," and someone else said "4500."

"Maybe she's a poor cook," Tommy muttered with an uneasy attempt to lift the tension.

The auctioneer redoubled his efforts. Putting out a sinewy arm, he grasped the girl's shoulder and turned her around so that everyone in the crowd could get a good look.

I gritted my teeth to keep from yelling at the indecency of it all. Craig drew in his breath sharply. "What the hell are we fighting a war about?" he said tightly.

Blakoe said nothing. He was leaning against the steps of one of the little houses, a pipe in the corner of his mouth. I couldn't tell whether his eyes were open or closed behind the dark sunglasses receding into the shadow of his cap brim.

The bidding picked up slightly, after a while, but around 7000 francs it stuck fast. We took a good look at the bidder—Tommy and Craig and I. He was a typical desert Arab, greasy and not too clean and running to fat. He looked at least fifty years old, squatting immovably on his square of rug.

The auctioneer worked hard, but he couldn't get another bid. We didn't understand Arabic, of course; the pantomime told enough of what was happening.

"Let's get out of here," Tommy said harshly, as the auctioneer raised his hand for the third time. "I—feel sort of sick."

Blakoe uncoiled like a watchspring and stood up on the steps in one swift movement. "Seventy-five hundred francs," he said, and his harsh baritone voice resounded over the chattering marketplace. The noise died with the rapidity of a train entering a tunnel, and it looked like a million faces turned toward Blakoe, his six-feet-three towering over us from the steps.

"My God, Blakoe," I said as quietly as possible, "get the hell down from there and shut up! You want to get us mobbed?"

He swayed slightly and paid no attention to me. The auctioneer hesitated, looked questioningly at the fat Arab who had said 7000 francs, and there was a long pause while the Arab got up lazily and made his way to the auction block. Once there he took a good look at the girl from all angles. Reaching out, he felt her arms casually.

Blakoe swore with cold fury. "Take your dirty hands off her," he said thickly. "She's not a piece of horseflesh, goddammit!" And Craig and Tommy and I got in a block in front of him, in case he should try to tangle with the Arab, but he stood still, swaying, with his fists clenched.

The fat Arab said something to the auctioneer, and Blakoe raised his voice stubbornly. "Seventy-five hundred francs."

The hush in the marketplace was thick enough to cut and spread on bread, while the Arab measured Blakoe from across the plaza, shrugged his heavy shoulders and shook his head definitely. Ponderously, he descended the steps of the auction block, rolled obesely toward his square of rug, his eyes fixed with black impassivity on Blakoe.

Blakoe paid no attention. He hauled out his wallet, and with unsteady fingers counted out money. "Here," he said to Ibrahim, "pay the guy and tell him to pack that girl off home, will you?"



Sour Mafudi was a typical desert town, built in a square, with houses facing inside and a blank wall outside, like an old medieval castle.

Ibrahim hesitated. "But, effendi—"

"Here," Blakoe pushed the money at him. Ibrahim closed his mouth, took the bills and snaked off through the crowd. Blakoe came down the few steps to where we were standing. "Let's get out of here," he said thickly. "Ibrahim can meet us at the jeep. Come on."

Silently we fell in around him and started toward the entrance to the town, the natives falling back from us as we went. Our Arab stood beside his rug, a little group of white-clad figures beside him—some petty sheik, I thought uneasily, and closed up to Tommy and Craig in case of trouble.

But there was none. The Arab merely stood and looked at Blakoe striding along like a king with his chin in the air.

Nobody said anything to us. Nobody moved toward us, but behind us the noise of voices rolled up like distant thunder. I never was so glad of anything in my life as when we reached the jeep outside the gate.

Blakoe climbed in the rear, tilted his hat over his eyes and folded his arms. We didn't say anything to him. We knew he was boiling mad inside, and it was always better to say nothing to Blakoe when he was mad.

We waited about five minutes for Ibrahim. When he came, he appeared silently on the other side of the jeep, taking us completely by surprise. He cleared his throat gently, and we nearly jumped out of our shirts.

He was not alone. The girl stood by his side, swathed to the eyes, and her hands red-stained in Arab fashion.

Craig choked and his voice cracked a bit. "Blakoe," he said, "take a look at what you bought!"

Blakoe opened his eyes and sat up. "Why bring her along?" he asked Ibrahim after a minute.

Ibrahim shrugged. "You bought her, effendi," he said simply. "What else should I do with her?"

"How the hell should I know?" Blakoe demanded. "Turn her back to the village—send her to her people."

There was a long pause while we looked at the girl, and she looked back at us. Her eyes showed a dumb resignation and her small shoulders dropped wearily. Poor kid, I thought, she must be scared to death.

"You paid a lot of money, effendi," Ibrahim was saying. "In the market they tell me she does not cook or clean well and is not trained for anything. You paid too much, but I do not think her father would give it back."

"I don't want it back," Blakoe said loudly. "I don't want the girl, either. For Pete's sake, Ibrahim, we don't have slaves in America. Take her back to her family and say the money is to pay for a dowry."

She couldn't have understood a word we said, but I suppose the distaste in Blakoe's voice didn't need translation. Her hands moved restlessly as she watched us.

Ibrahim hesitated, resistance in every line of him, "Your pardon, sir," he said softly. "It would be better that you keep her. If she goes back to her father, he will not use the money for a dowry. He will just sell her again next month."

Tommy looked at Blakoe. "He's right, of course. These Arabs are tricky devils, Blakoe. What the hell, take her along."

"'Take her along,' he says," Blakoe grunted bitterly. "Take her where—to Tunis? Put her in the camp? Have some sense, can't you?"

"Maybe she's got relatives somewhere," I suggested.

"That's an idea, Dave," Blakoe was grasping at straws. "How about that, Ibrahim?"

"She has no relatives, effendi," Ibrahim stated with quiet firmness. "You might as well take her."

"Nothing doing," Blakoe was equally firm. He took a good look at his purchase and shuddered slightly. "Lord, she's a horrible sight! About four feet high, and look at those bloody hands! Be a pal, Ibrahim. I don't care what you do with her, but take her away, will you? It makes me sick to look at her."

The tone of his voice was unmistakable. She winced slightly and drew a step closer to Ibrahim.

"I have no place to take her, effendi," Ibrahim said quickly. I thought he looked rather more appalled by the suggestion than was necessary, but perhaps it was just that he already had a wife or a sweetheart and was afraid of trouble. "I really think it is better if she comes with you to Tunis. She can live in the native quarter and do your laundry. You wouldn't have to see her."

"Laundry?" we chorused. "Can she do *laundry?*"

"Oh, all right," Blakoe said disgustedly. "Anything to get out of here. My head is splitting. What the hell was in that beer? Pile her in and let's go."

So we tucked her in between Ibrahim and me on the front seat. She was so small she fitted in all right even in a jeep. All the way to Tunis she sat uncomplainingly beside me and never said a word. None of us had much to say. Ibrahim drove like the wind, or as if the desert demons were after him. And perhaps, in a way, they were. . . .

It was late when we reached Tunis and we had to report at once. Blakoe handed the girl over to Ibrahim in spite of his protests.

"I don't care what you do with her," he said flatly. "You made me bring her. I've got no place for her to stay, and I don't care where she goes. Park her with one of your friends overnight. Here," he pulled out some 1000-franc notes, "you can think of *something.*"

Ibrahim shrugged and accepted his charge resignedly, but he would not take the money. "No," he said positively, "you do not understand, Captain Blakoe. I do this for you because I know that you do not understand, but there can be no money."

It was while we were getting ready for bed that there was a soft tap on the barracks door. Some impulse made me reach for my gun, as Blakoe said sharply, "Who is it?"

The door opened a fraction of an inch. "It is I, Ali ben Sidi," whispered a voice. "You permit?" In a flash, he was in the room—you wouldn't have thought a fat man could move so quickly.

"Yes?" said Blakoe, as the native closed the door noiselessly.

"My cousin 'as told me of this day and the events of the market at Sour Mafudi," Ali muttered, and I was amazed to see his swarthy skin was pale. He huddled against the door and wrung his hands together in anguish. "I have come to say—to say—"

"To say what?" Blakoe demanded impatiently.

Ali threw out his hands in a gesture of despair. "You do not know, you not onnerstan'," he began. "What you 'ave done—it is bad." He shook his head unhappily. "There will be much trouble, *mon capitaine,* and I have come to say, I would nevair have sent you my cousin—any member of my family—to be so involved."

"Involved in what?" Blakoe stared at him. "What are you getting at, Ali?"

"It is the sheik Fouad Bir Hadjah," Ali quavered. "It is that you have upset the ways of the desert and he will make you pay for the insult to his dignity. He is a dangerous man," —his voice began to rise excitedly—"and his vengeance cannot be escaped. There must be much money, *mon capitaine*—very much money to protect my family, you onnerstan'?"

"Why, you old fraud," Blakoe said contemptuously. "Money for what? Your cousin was well paid to take us out for the day."

Ali protested in a native whine. The Sheik Fouad, it appeared, was the greasy Arab who had bid 7000 francs. A person of great consequence in the desert, he had prearranged that he would pay 7000 for the girl—no more. And Blakoe had not known the sale was fixed and had upset the

arrangements. "Upon all of you—yes, and upon my family, too—he will visit his wrath," Ali wailed, and wrung his hands. "There must be money, much money—"

Blakoe raised his eyebrows. "You boys should get together on this," he remarked. "You come around demanding money, and Ibrahim turned down what I offered him two hours ago. I'm not offering it any more, so you can save your breath."

Ali merely groaned and wrung his hands some more, until I said, "Good night, old boy," and eased him out the door. He stood just outside the sill and hissed, "This is bad, very bad. You do not know what you 'ave done. But Fouad will make you know—with a knife, *mon capitaine!*"

Whirling on his heel, he made off through the darkness of the camp, muttering to himself and still wringing his hands. I closed the door and turned to Blakoe. "It looks like you've really got in it up to the ears, boy! Shall I stand guard to make sure you don't wake up with a knife in your back?"

Blakoe just grunted. "That was an act to get more money," he said cynically. "I thought there'd be some pitch from Ali to get a little extra cut. Come on. I'm turning in."

When the lights were off, my uneasiness grew. There was a devil-may-care buccaneering spirit in Blakoe that made him a natural leader among men. He'd been in scrapes before—there was a girl in Florida, and a couple of card sharps in Dakar—but Tommy and Craig and I had always figured a way to help him out.

But this was different. After a while, I said, "It's none of my business, but what the deuce will you do with that girl? She doesn't look old enough to be away from her mother."

"Do with her?" Blakoe repeated through the sultry darkness. "Why,"—he laughed shortly—"I'm going to give her a bath, and we'll go on from there."

IBRAHIM was waiting by the barracks door when I got back the next evening. The way the natives slid in and out of the camp, we might as well have set the sentries to playing pinochle. I was absurdly relieved to see him.

"Hello, Ibrahim," I said. "How's our stepchild today? Did you find a place for her to stay?"

He bowed slightly, his face impenetrable in the dusk. "She is lodged in the Street of the Four Hunchbacks, Captain Marshall. I have but just come from her room and she is still there."

"Where else would she be?" I asked in surprise. "From what you told us yesterday, she hadn't any place to go."

Ibrahim shrugged. "It was possible that someone might have come for her."

I sat down on the barracks steps and motioned him to sit beside me. "Ibrahim," I said impulsively, "tell me about all this. I gather Captain Blakoe has put his foot in it—but just what's the deal? I guess you know we didn't mean any harm, and we don't want to make things worse from now on. What should we do with the girl? Is there any way to straighten it out?"

"The damage is done," he said after a moment, his voice withdrawn and dispassionate. "It was bad that Captain Blakoe should bid against Sheik Fouad Bir Hadjah, who is a most powerful man. Still, his power is less in the city of Tunis, and I do not think he would wish to cause trouble with American officers.

"If I might suggest—an emissary to explain matters to Sheik Fouad. This could be arranged, and the girl sent to him as a present—from the American Army, perhaps. Thus he would save face and gain dignity."

I thought of the fatness of Sheik Fouad with revulsion. "Captain Blakoe won't think much of that idea," I said. "He only bought the girl to save her from the Sheik."

Ibrahim shrugged. "Fouad does not care about the girl," he returned. "He cares very much that he has been made to look a fool by infidels."

"Isn't there anything else we can do?"

"Oh, yes," Ibrahim said calmly. "You can sell the girl again at the next auction, if you like—although I do not think you will get your money out of her. Or—if you like to give her a dowry—perhaps you can get her a husband."

"How much money would a dowry cost?"

"Ten thousand francs should be enough."

"Enough for what?" Blakoe's voice asked. He came around the corner of the barracks. "Hello, Ibrahim. How's the baby?"

"He's found her a room," I said. "We were just talking about what to do with her."

Blakoe laughed. "Give her a bath first! Then we'll see. Wait until I can clean up, Ibrahim, and we'll go right over."

Ibrahim had done a good job. At least he had found the girl a tiny apartment in a fairly decent part of the native quarter, and it wasn't off limits. It had a washtub and a lot of cushions and some tacky-looking curtains. The smell was ripe, but we were getting used to the aromas of Africa by that time.

She was sitting quietly on a cushion when we came in, still wearing the dirty-white sugar-sack garment. She got up quickly and made a little salaam. Then she just stood, her great dark eyes fixed inscrutably on Blakoe, as if to say, "You bought me. I await your pleasure."

Blakoe lounged in the doorway, his height and strongly modeled features a throwback to some ancestral Viking sea captain. After a minute, he said, "Does she have a name?"

"It is Xaverie," Ibrahim murmured.

"Pretty," Blakoe mused. He glanced at the washtub. "Tell her the first thing is to wash herself. And get that red stuff off her hands if possible."

Ibrahim started to protest, but Blakoe wouldn't listen. "Where's the water?" he asked and hunted around till he found a copper pot. "Here, fill this up and put it on the fire, and get clean," he said to Xaverie.

Her eyes took on a dumb fright at the strange language. Timidly she accepted the pot, glanced humbly at Ibrahim, who shrugged and translated Blakoe's order into a series of syllables that were both guttural and liquid at the same time.

"And tell her to stop being so frightened," Blakoe said loudly. "I'm not going to eat her. Come on, Dave. We'll come back in an hour."

WE walked over to the Hotel Majestic, and the first person we saw was Ali ben Sidi, who pretended he didn't know us. He looked past us and around us and hastily slid away from the bar without finishing his *aperitif*.

"What the hell?" said Blakoe. "You'd think we were untouchables or something!"

The incident put him in a bad mood, and if I'd had any hope of being able to talk him into putting up a dowry for the disposal of Xaverie, I knew this wasn't the time to speak.

It was when we went out that I knew we were in for trouble. Out of the corner of my eye I glimpsed a white-robed figure detach itself from a group of natives on the curb and some sixth sense made me draw closer to Blakoe with my hand on my gun.

Behind us the footsteps were almost inaudible—the faint rattle of a stone in the cobbled street, a slither of clothing. For a long while we walked toward the Street of the Four Hunchbacks, and the footsteps came no closer, until I had almost persuaded myself it was imagination. Then as we turned into the narrow alley that led to Xaverie's door, I sensed motion behind me.

It must have been an automatic reflex that made me push Blakoe violently to one side and throw myself the opposite way. The razor-sharp native knife whistled past us and lodged, quivering but harmless, in the door before us.

Blakoe, recovering himself with an oath, whirled to scan the alley, but it contained nothing—silence and smells and the distant screech of a *deboukka* in some native café. On top of Ali ben Sidi's refusal to recognize us, the knife was enough to turn Blakoe into one of his stubborn moods of fury.

I did my best. "Maybe you'd better let the kid go," I said. "You're worth more to the Army than saving a kid from native customs."

He just scowled at me and flung open Xaverie's door without a word. Ibrahim stood silently by the window. He came quickly toward us, his eyes a question-mark and relief written all over his face. He spotted the knife buried in the door at once, and shrugged. "You see?" he seemed to say.

Blakoe paid no attention to our by-play. He put his hands on his hips and surveyed Xaverie with detachment. She had had a bath and wore a clean white robe, but she still looked like a midget. She stood passive, as he walked around her, approving the cleanliness.

After a while he said, "Is she a dwarf, or don't they come any bigger over here? How old is she, anyway?"

"Sixteen, sir," said Ibrahim.

"Just the age of my kid sister," Blakoe said. All of a sudden he reached out and lifted Xaverie into the air by her elbows, like a man playing with a baby. He grinned at her and said, "What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?"

And Xaverie laughed. From behind the long white veil we got the richest, most infectious chuckle you ever heard. Blakoe set her down like a hot coal and looked startled. "Can she talk?" he asked Ibrahim. "Tell her to say something."

Ibrahim chattered away in Arabic for a minute, and suddenly she answered him. Her voice was soft and low—the most musical I'd ever heard.

"What's she saying?" Blakoe asked.

"She's saying the American is a funny man who treats her like a child."

Blakoe looked at her intently for a minute. Then he reached out like a sleepwalker and twitched off her face veil. Ibrahim drew in a sharp breath and protested vehemently, "*No!* Captain Blakoe, you do not know what you do! You must not look at her face, sir. Let her replace it, I beg of you."

Xaverie was neither pretty nor repulsive. She had a face, that was all. Her features were small and her skin was dark and smooth. While Ibrahim wrung his hands and protested, trying to take the face veil from Blakoe's grasp and replace it, we stood and considered the girl.

"She might have possibilities," Blakoe said. "What do you think, Dave? Shall we buy her some decent clothes and see what she looks like?"

Ibrahim finally got the veil back in place, keeping his eyes averted from Xaverie's face, and I had a dim recollection that there was something very significant about face veils. Something we'd been told when we were briefed for North Africa, but I couldn't remember exactly what.

Anyway, it didn't matter because Blakoe just took the veil off again, and told Ibrahim as nicely as possible to mind his own business. Ibrahim looked at him in despair for a moment. "May Allah forgive me for my part in this," he said solemnly. "It is written that one shall treat the stranger as a brother, but you know not what you do. Allah wills it so."

Blakoe was still looking at Xaverie thoughtfully. I don't think he'd heard a word Ibrahim said. After a moment, he sat down cross-legged on a cushion and motioned Xaverie to sit down, too. "Can you say my name?" he asked. "Captain Blakoe?"

She learned quickly. At the end of an hour she could say our names and knew the words for "water" and "cushion" and a lot of other things in the room. Ibrahim stood by the window, with his back turned to us. When we got up to go, he snatched at the face veil, and still with his face averted, waved it at Xaverie.

But she wouldn't put it on again. With quite a show of vehemence in her soft pretty voice, she told Ibrahim the equivalent of "nothing doing."

"That's the girl," Blakoe laughed. "Real American independence."

Ibrahim's shoulders sagged and he shrugged fatalistically. After that he made no further effort to interfere. Impassively, he agreed to get Xaverie started on our laundry right away. Getting things washed in the Army was always a problem because all the laundresses did a brisk trade on the side which speedily put the laundries out of bounds.

Blakoe stood in the doorway for a minute looking lazily at the knife, still buried in the wood. "Who'd have thought buying a laundress could be so dangerous?" he remarked. "Sleep tight, Xaverie, and Ibrahim will bring you a bundle of laundry tomorrow."

Xaverie turned out to be a terrific laundress. She didn't mind how much stuff she tackled and she did get things clean. She learned how to iron, and Blakoe rented her out to all the men in the unit, so she had all the work she could handle. We took pretty good care of her, and nearly every day someone would go down to leave laundry, or pick up things, or maybe just see if she were all right. After all, she was only sixteen.

We taught her English—decent English. Blakoe found one of the boys thought it was funny to teach her some Anglo-Saxon, and he went around and beat him to a pulp as an object lesson to any other jokers in the outfit. We bought her some clothes, and I taught her to cook a few simple American dishes the way we liked them.

Gradually the apartment began to look sort of homelike. We brought in some dishes and rugs and a few cushions. Tommy kept a spare supply of tobacco and cigarette papers in one corner and he finally found a taker for the finished product: Xaverie.

"Aside from the fact that you'll probably stunt her growth," said Craig, "I hope you realize you're contributing to the delinquency of a minor."

"Aah, you're just jealous," Tommy returned smugly, and he promptly bought three cigarette boxes to keep Xaverie well supplied.

The funny thing was that she never did develop a taste for chewing gum, although Craig spent a lot of time rounding up every conceivable flavor and brand.

There was a phonograph with square-dance records for Craig and hillbilly songs for Tommy. I got some records of native music for Xaverie. Some of them were rather pretty when you got used to them, and from the rate at which they wore out, I guess she spent a lot of time listening to them when she was alone.

We gave up sitting in the bar of the Majestic and instead sat at Xaverie's. She was no trouble at all. She spoke when we spoke to her, but the rest of the time she just sat quietly—as close as she could get to Blakoe—and looked at us. If we needed an ashtray or a fresh cup of coffee, she was always right there with it.

After a month, we'd forgotten about Sheik Fouad and his possible vengeance. Ali ben Sidi was still pretending he'd never known us, but Blakoe put that down to annoyance over not getting any more money out of us. Privately, I had a hunch the tangle with Fouad might have harmed Ali's undercover black-market activities, which was all to the good.

We were in the barracks one afternoon, getting ready to run down to Xaverie's for a minute, when there was a tap on the door and Ibrahim slid in. His face was serious and anxious. "I come to tell you there is trouble," he said with no preamble. "It is said in the bazaar that Fouad will make you pay for your insult to him. He will not dare attempt your life again, so he will take it out on Xaverie."

"The devil he will!" Blakoe drawled grimly. "You just drop him a word that he won't get away with it."

"It is known that you will be on duty tonight," Ibrahim returned simply. "He will take her away."

Blakoe muttered a curse. "Don't you believe it," he said harshly. "She's going back to that greasy bastard only over my dead body! Tell Tommy he'll have to take my duty and find someone to take over for you, Dave. Thanks for the warning, Ibrahim."

Ibrahim drew himself up, impenetrable as ever. "It is written that one shall protect the stranger within his gates, effendi."

Blakoe looked at him absently. "Don't let Xaverie know about this," he said suddenly. "I don't want her frightened. Come on, Dave. Let's go."

UNDER cover of darkness, we slid into the Street of the Four Hunchbacks. Tommy and Craig were with us. They'd refused point-blank to take over our duty when they heard what was up, and had bullied a couple of majors to take our places. Xaverie's little apartment was reasonably cool and inviting with the dim lights and cushions waiting for us.

We sat around drinking coffee and talking quietly for a long time. "Do you suppose they saw us?" Tommy asked restlessly. "You never know with these natives. Someone next door might have seen us come in and tipped off the others."

Although we'd said nothing to Xaverie, she sensed our tension and sat taut, her dark eyes traveling anxiously from one to another of us. It was nearly time for us to return to camp, and Tommy and Craig, who'd been spoiling for a fight, were feeling frustrated.

Suddenly the door opened in a swift motion. Something gleamed and spat, shattering the one lamp bulb. With the room in darkness, there was the rushing motion of bodies. Tommy and Craig plunged in with a will. Xaverie screamed and fled to a corner behind Blakoe.

A table fell over with a crash, sending glasses and cups tinkling to the floor. There was the strain and heaving of arms and legs, but no more shots.

As I tangled with a white-robed figure my mind worked busily. They had known we were there—otherwise why were there so many of them? They had prepared for handling four Army officers in the pink of condition—and they still expected to get Xaverie away from our protection.

In the dim light of the door swinging free, I saw a silent figure working its way around the walls—creeping noiselessly under the cover of the battle—and I got the idea. We were to be diverted, taken care of by an advance guard, while the real kidnaper sneaked in behind our backs to snatch his prey.

With a shout to Blakoe, I threw off my Arab and sent him spinning across the room toward the sneaking figure by the wall. Blakoe took in the situation at a glance and made for the kidnaper.

The cold dampness of a knife blade slid along my arm, tearing the blouse like tissue paper, and I brought the butt of my gun full force on my assailant. I felt a deep, un-Christian satisfaction as he crumpled and slid to the floor; then I headed toward Blakoe struggling in the corner of the room.

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the room was empty. The Arabs were gone like shadows, dragging the fallen man with them. With unsteady fingers, Tommy flicked his cigarette lighter open and we looked at each other in the tiny gleam. The place was a shambles and Craig's blouse was ripped worse than mine. We lit a native lamp and congratulated each other on a good show with the heartiness of men released from tension.

Blakoe cursed bitterly. "I almost had him," he said.

"Maybe that's why they took off," I said. No one answered.

In the faint light of the lamp, Blakoe stood holding his wrist and swaying slightly. With a scream, Xaverie ran to him. "They 'urt you," she said, over and over again.

"It's nothing," he said, but he sounded dazed. She pulled him down onto a cushion and we all clustered around, but it was only a zigzag cut just above his left wrist. It was bleeding freely, but Craig said it hadn't gone deep enough to hit anything important, and a bandage would fix it up in no time.

"You'll have an interesting scar to tell the tale," he remarked with a laugh. "Boy, how the girls will go for it!"

Blakoe managed a grin. "I can say I went to Heidelberg."



Blakoe looked intently at Xaverie, then removed her face veil. Ibrahim inhaled sharply. "No, Captain!" he protested. "You do not know what you do. Let her replace it, I beg of you."

Xaverie was unconvinced. I had a nasty bruise on my forehead that was already turning purple and Tommy had wrenched his wrist so he wouldn't be making cigarettes for a few days, but nothing mattered to her except Blakoe and his scratch. She knelt beside him and stroked his arm with her tiny hands, murmuring a flood of Arabic in her pretty voice. He grew red with embarrassment, but just the same he liked it.

We worried about leaving her there alone, but she was sure she would be safe. "They not come back," she insisted. And of course it was impossible for us to keep a guard around her all the time. If they meant to kidnap her, they'd certainly find a chance, no matter what we did. . . .

It was the next day that our orders came through. We were in a clean-up detachment, with the war up ahead of us in Italy, and until we'd had Xaverie and the little apartment, we'd been eager to get away from Tunisia. Now it was sort of a shock to me to think of leaving. I'd had a lot of plans for things to teach Xaverie. How to read, for instance, and I thought perhaps she could learn to play gin rummy.

Ibrahim was waiting by the barracks steps that evening. "You are leaving," he said calmly.

"How the hell did you know?" Blakoe stared at him.

The usual shrug. "It is known. And what next?"

"Xaverie? Oh, she'll be all right," Blakoe said easily. "I'll take care of it."

"How about giving her a dowry, Ibrahim?" I asked. "Could she go back home and get married if we made it big enough?"

Ibrahim fixed my eyes with his—black and inscrutable—and slowly, definitely, flatly, shook his head.

"But you said—" I began.

"The face has been seen by the infidel," Ibrahim reminded me. "Veiled, Xaverie might marry. Unveiled, she is untouchable—defiled."

"Hold on," Blakoe said shortly. "You know perfectly well she's as good as the day she came here, Ibrahim."

Ibrahim gestured humbly with his right hand. "Yes, Captain Blakoe, this I know—but these are *your* laws. The law of the desert is different. Xaverie cannot marry a Moslem."

"Then what can she do?" I demanded uneasily. "For Pete's sake, Ibrahim, you know we didn't understand all this. Isn't there anything we can do to straighten it out? A great big dowry, or something?"

"No matter how much money she has, no Mohammedan can marry her," Ibrahim returned positively. "She might be fortunate enough to find a Frenchman willing to marry her. Not a Frenchman of the upper classes, of course, but if she had enough dowry—and with the accomplishments you have taught her—"

And from the tone of his voice it was pretty evident that such a Frenchman would treat Xaverie like dirt. The alternative was one of the houses that were out of bounds.

"No," I said sharply. "There must be something—some other way—"

Blakoe refused to take it so seriously. He was being detached from the unit and moving up to Italy while the rest of us were going over to Cairo, and he was in one of his wild moods where you couldn't get any sense out of him.

"You're responsible for Xaverie," I told him. "You bought her."

But all he would say was, *"You* made me bring her to Tunis. And she'll make out all right. She could get a job in a shop with the English and French she knows, and I'll leave enough money so she won't starve."

"Fouad will probably carry her off to the desert," I objected, but Blakoe just said, "Let him. Stop making such a time about it, Dave. The girl's had a taste of decent life, she's been treated kindly and she isn't defiled, whatever Ibrahim may say. But she's better in the desert. It's no kindness to try to tear a native away from what he's used to."

"This is a fine time to say that," I countered hotly, but I could see it was no use. He was all pepped up about his transfer and he didn't want to think about anything else.

We didn't say anything to Xaverie about leaving, but she found out, of course, and the day before Blakoe was due to take off, he was summonded to the Colonel's office. I went along with him, and there was Xaverie, huddled in a corner of the room, with a brawny MP standing over her looking embarrassed.

Colonel Ives looked up under his bushy eyebrows and barked, "Captain Blakoe, do I understand you are responsible for this girl?"

Blakoe flushed slightly. "I—guess so, sir."

"Why?"

"I—er—bought her, sir."

Colonel Ives choked slightly and measured Blakoe with an incredulous eye. *"Bought* her?" he repeated, sounding dazed. Then, getting a grip on himself, he barked, "Please arrange to sell her immediately, in that case. She's not to be found hiding in the camp again. That is all."

Xaverie slipped under the MP's arm with a little cry and threw herself against Blakoe. She came up only to his chest, and she began babbling, "You not go, you not go!"—while Blakoe got purple in the face and Colonel Ives cleared his throat loudly.

"That will be all, Jones," he said curtly to the entranced MP, who turned on his heel and left unwillingly.

For a moment there was silence, broken only by Xaverie's wails.

"Damned mess," Colonel Ives muttered uncomfortably. "I don't know what it's all about—and I don't want to know. I hope it's not the usual thing—"

"No, sir!" Blakoe said, looking very straight at the Colonel.

"Girl's in love with you—"

Blakoe tightened his arms about Xaverie. "I'm afraid so, sir." He paused a minute. "She's just the age of my kid sister, sir."

"Well, well. . . . Take her away and see if you can explain it to her."

"Yes, sir."

In silence we retreated, Blakoe holding Xaverie's hand like a baby and striding along so rapidly she almost ran to keep up with him.

We did our best to explain, but all Xaverie knew was that Blakoe, her savior, was leaving her. It did no good to say that he would come back as soon as possible, or that we were not leaving—Tommy and Craig and I—for another week. We weren't what she wanted. It was hopeless to suggest that she should stay in the little apartment and wait for us. We got Ibrahim to come over and try to tell her in Arabic, to be sure she understood.

I wrote down our addresses and the names of our families in America and gave it to Ibrahim with all the money I had. I said, "We made a mistake, Will you help us to make it right for her?"

Ibrahim sketched a salaam and said, "I will do my best."

I said, "In America we shake hands on a promise, Ibrahim," and we shook hands firmly.

Then we had to go. Blakoe emptied his wallet into Xaverie's hands, patted her head and her shoulder and said, "I have to go now. Be a good girl and do what Ibrahim tells you."

In the doorway he stopped and turned to look about the little room. Gently he put his arms about Xaverie and kissed her. "God bless," he said, and strode away toward the camp.

I went over to her, holding out my hand, but her eyes were fixed on Blakoe's back. "Good-by, Xaverie," I said. "Ibrahim will help you, and if you ever need anything, remember to let me know."

She took my hand, but I don't think she heard me. Her lips moved soundlessly. Her hand held the wad of paper money—and her eyes held heartbreak. •

A BLUEBOOK PROFILE

• By LESTER DAVID

One of the slickest pickpockets in business, Fred Roner has robbed police chiefs, judges and diplomats, and the police think he's wonderful.

FREDDIE, the DIP



Illustrated by DAVE STONE

IT WAS THE LAST PLACE in the world where you would expect a crime to be committed. The banquet room of the Hotel Mayflower in Washington was jammed with top police brass from all parts of the country. Sprinkled among them were Federal Bureau of Investigation agents and high officials of the Department of Justice.

Yet throughout the evening a pickpocket was plying his trade, his slick fingers collecting watches and wallets almost every time he stopped to chat with one of the guests. As final proof of his proficiency, he swiped a watch right off the wrist of the top G-man, J. Edgar Hoover.

There are two differences between this suave, Vienna-born pickpocket with a Continental manner and his brother artists of the dip trade. For one thing, this man is one of the best in the business. In the past twenty-five years he has stolen more than $1,000,000 in cold cash and another

$5,000,000 worth of jewelry. Secondly, he gives the stuff back.

There's nobody quite like Fred Roner in the country. What Dunninger is to fake spiritualism and Michael MacDougall is to crooked gambling, Fred Roner is to pocket-picking.

He travels constantly, giving lectures before civic, social, industrial and law-enforcement groups, on the art of the dip—an art which he learned, on the pretense of using it illegally, from master European crooks in a fabulous School for Pickpockets in the heart of old Warsaw's crime district.

Police praise this distinguished heist-school alumnus, because by giving them a first-hand line on the gimmicks of the trade, Roner helps them find ways of combating pickpockets. And in his own way Roner has dealt more blows to the dips than squads of police ever could, simply by showing people how easily they can be parted from their valuables, and how to keep themselves from being victimized.

Roner insists that when a real pocket artist gets going, no one is immune, and to prove his point he has rifled the pockets of judges, diplomats, police, jail wardens, bankers and assorted others, among them the late Wendell Willkie, as well as ex-President Herbert Hoover.

The way he cleaned the brass at the Hotel Mayflower meeting is indicative of a real professional's skill. The occasion was an alumni dinner of the FBI Academy, a school which the FBI conducts at Quantico, Va., to teach police the G-men's crime-detection methods.

Roner was introduced to FBI Chief Hoover on the dais and they shook hands. It was just a brief shake, but Roner works fast. He unbuckled the leather strap on Hoover's wrist with his index finger and let the watch slip into his palm when they released hands.

Then, to compound the gag, Roner calmly slipped the watch into the jacket pocket of Tom Clark, Supreme Court justice, who was then Attorney General and Hoover's boss.

Hoover's face was a study in bewilderment when he missed the watch, but it hardly compared to Tom Clark's when the watch was discovered in his pocket. Even more crestfallen were police officials who found their wallets gone and their shields switched to someone else's pocket.

Not long after, Roner dipped into Vice President Alben W. Barkley's pockets.

"I stuck my fingers systematically into each one," he says. " 'This is going to be a complete bust,' I thought. 'The guy's got nothing on him.' Finally, I came across two rumpled one-dollar bills, all the money he was carrying. I can therefore testify that the gentleman from Paducah is not a profitable subject for any pro. Never brings along more than a few bucks."

On the same occasion, he was showing James P. McGranery (who later was Attorney General in President Truman's cabinet) an aspect of the dip business. Absorbed in what Roner was saying, the judge suddenly had the uncomfortable feeling that his pants were slipping.

He was right. After all, Roner had his suspenders. He had simply unbuttoned them and removed them while he was showing McGranery how a professional pickpocket gets into a victim's breast pocket. It was just a matter of diverting attention. While Roner had the judge's gaze and thoughts riveted on how his fingers were manipulating at the breast pocket, one hand was busily swiping the suspenders.

Roner, who is forty-seven, is a handsome man-about-town, an affable, well-dressed chap with a bland, open face who would fit perfectly into the guest list of any swank party. In other words, he looks exactly like a pickpocket.

That's not a misprint. Despite all stories and movies depicting them as ferret-eyed, crooked-mouthed, tough gents with flashy clothes, the real operatives look for all the world like anything but fiction-style pickpockets.

"You can never spot a dip by looking for one," Roner declares. "A clever one no more resembles the conventional idea of a criminal than does a college professor or atomic scientist. A pickpocket deliberately cultivates an average appearance so that he can all the more easily pass unnoticed. The pickpocket who looks like one is just a creation of Hollywood and TV scenarists."

The lectures and demonstrations are in the public interest, but also are Roner's livelihood. He gives back what he swipes, but the fees, which are healthy, he keeps. He has entertained at some of the finest homes in America—families like the Fords and Chryslers hire him to haul their guests through the ropes.

Living with a pickpocket can be a trial, as Mrs. Roner, a dark, attractive Austrian dancer, can testify:

"I looked in my purse for my fountain pen. I knew I had had it there a minute earlier. The purse was right on the mantel and I was sure nobody had touched it. I went into Fred's study, and there he was, writing checks with my pen. Then I remembered that he had passed by the mantel on his way to the kitchen; I don't remember that he even stopped."

Or take another instance: "Once we went to a restaurant for dinner. I happened to know Fred had forgotten to cash a check and didn't have any money with him. But when the time came to pay, he pulled out a ten-dollar bill and gave me the change. Maybe getting it out of my purse wasn't too hard, but how he was able to rummage among all the things I have in there I'll never know."

Interviewing Fred Roner can be a trial for a reporter. I talked to him for many hours at a number of sessions, and at the conclusion of one he handed me my glasses, a stick of chewing-gum, a fountain pen, a half-dozen letters and my wallet. At the last talk, I asked him if he had some photographs. He got some out and put them on the desk. When I was ready to leave, I looked for them. They were gone.

"Did you take those pictures back?" I asked.

"Why, no," he answered. "You put them in your briefcase."

I knew I hadn't. The case was at my feet, zipped shut. I opened it, and there the pictures were. He had opened the case inserted the photos, and closed it again, and I hadn't noticed a thing.

Pickpockets have their own lingo. A practitioner may be called a booster, cannon, carny-grifter, claw, dig, dip, hi-jacker, hooker, jostler or super-twister. To give a wallet to an accomplice is to duke the poke, unload, or weed the poke. When a victim realizes that he may be dipped into and covers up, he's called a pratt-wise guy. The act of jostling a victim in preparation for a dip is called throwing a hump, weaving a mark or giving one a roust.

An inside jacket pocket is called a pit. The side pockets on the jacket are tail pits, side trouser pockets are right bridge and left bridge, and the rear pockets are left and right pratts. The jacket change pocket is a fob.

Most experts confine their activities to men, but those who open women's handbags are called moll-buzzers.

The artists of the profession gather at the better hotels, scan the newspapers for announcements of big business conventions, stroll along the higher-priced shopping areas, busy themselves at banks or dress in elegant clothes and attend funerals of noted personages.

When an expert dip goes on the downgrade, he degenerates into a fob worker—just stealing the change from a guy's pocket. Lowest he can fall is the lush-worker category, which means either slugging and robbing a drunk, or just rolling a chap who has passed out.

The high-class pros have the utmost contempt for the lush workers. Roner once overheard a virtuoso performer make the scathing comment, "A pickpocket who would roll a drunk is nothing but a common thief."

A FEW pickpockets work alone, Roner asserts, but usually those who do it for a living travel in groups. As a gang they can work a series of relays to get rid of the loot in case the fleeced victim makes a scene. Usually, they operate in threes.

"Sometimes," Roner says, "one will pretend to be a drunk and will stagger against a potential victim. Then a bystander, actually a light-fingered gent, will intervene and remove the wallet as he is 'taking care' of the drunk. A third member will pose as an innocent onlooker and will take the wallet from the second man. His job is to beat it immediately, in case trouble starts."

One of their neatest tricks is the "Beware of Pickpockets" sign gimmick. These signs are spotted in public places where many persons come into close contact with one another. Pickpockets watch for the fellow who reads the sign and swiftly pats his pocket to see if his wallet still is there. That's all the pickpocket has been waiting for. He knows that this fellow has something to lose, and he knows which pocket it is in.

"The sign trick," reports Roner, "is such a perfect giveaway that many pickpockets actually make their own and tack them up themselves."

Strangely enough, after a professional pickpocket has extracted the bills from a wallet and wiped off all fingerprints, he will drop the wallet into the nearest mailbox.

"It isn't a matter of scruples," says Roner. "Some dips actually have a strong superstition against throwing moneyless wallets away. There's no reason for it, they just feel that way. Others feel that if a victim gets back his important papers, he'll be so relieved he'll forget about making any complaints. Few if any will keep a billfold, no matter how expensive it is. I once knew a pickpocket who returned, by mail, a jeweled wallet that might have fetched many hundreds of dollars."

Roner muscled into the pickpocket business, and made an honest career of it, in an incredible way. At an early age he became fascinated with magic and sleight of hand. Later, after he had opened a small shirt factory in his native Vienna, he whiled away his idle moments—there were many of them—by practicing card tricks.

One day a former schoolmate he hadn't seen for years stopped in to see Roner. The man needed a passport badly and couldn't get one. He asked if Roner had one he could use.

Roner had one but refused to part with it. A few days later Roner glanced in a desk drawer. The passport was gone. Roner gave a resigned shrug.

A year and a half later, the man walked into the shop again. Angrily, Fred Roner half rose but was waved down.

"Look, friend," the visitor said earnestly as he pulled over a chair. "I took your passport—but I needed it badly. You see, I'm a gambler. Card sharp, they call me. I got into a bit of trouble with the police and had to disappear for a while. It's blown over now, and I want to pay you back."

"Ah, forget it," Roner said. "I don't want your money."

"You're not getting money," the gambler assured Roner. He leaned closer. "I understand you're something of a magician. You give little shows around town. Well, in payment, I'm going to teach you some really fancy tricks you never heard about. They'll put you in the big time. I'll give you the whole lowdown on how a crooked card-player operates. You can use the stuff in your own way."

He was as good as his word. Roner learned how to cut cards so that he knew exactly what was on top, on the bottom, and in between. He learned how to palm cards, peek at them when dealing, and distribute them so that he knew who was getting what. He learned how to stack them expertly and shuffle them swiftly, and still keep track of the key cards. He learned how to deal from the bottom so that no one could tell the difference.

Roner incorporated the tricks into his act, and the new tricks proved so popular that he gave up the shirt business and became a standard turn in European night-clubs, cabarets and music halls.

"ONE day, Roner now recalls, "a thought occurred to me. I wanted to develop a brand-new effect. I thought it would be a sensational stunt if I could have someone select a card and watch me put it some place. Then, at the end of the trick, I'd have him open his wallet and find the card in it. Or it would turn up in another spectator's wallet."

Roner looked up his gambler friend and asked how it could be done.



Pickpockets often work in three's. The first man, pretending drunkenness, distracts the victim. The second man intervenes to take care of the drunk, and lifts the victim's valuables, passing them to the third man, who disappears with the goods if the victim starts making trouble.

"You're out of my field now," said the card sharp. "You need a pickpocket to teach you how to get your hands on the wallet."

"Can you find one for me?"

He could and did. The chosen teacher was a mild-mannered little fellow, a top-notch performer who frequently got his fingers on $500 or more each week.

"Darned if he didn't teach me," Roner declares. "Europeans always carry their wallets in their inside breast pockets, on the left or right sides. It was simply a matter of touching a victim lightly to locate its presence, then diverting his attention by jostling his shoulder or back while the hand flicked inside."

The new stunt worked fine for about two years. But again Roner wanted to improve the act. More extensive pocket-picking was the answer, he felt. "The only trouble was that I had only been taught to steal wallets. How about stickpins, watches, jewelry? How could I get into pants as well as jacket pockets?"

Stopped by a border guard, **Roner started an argument, lifted the rubber stamp and himself okayed his own and his wife's passports.**

He went back to Vienna, looked up the dip and asked him to teach him the rest of the trade.

But the pickpocket shook his head negatively. The brotherhood, he said, wouldn't allow him to divulge such secrets.

Brotherhood! Roner learned then that there was an actual organization of pickpockets in Europe, with officers, dues and strict requirements for membership.

But the surprise was yet to come. The organization, Roner was told, operated a number of schools on the Continent, where the older members who could no longer work the streets acted as instructors. The Viennese pickpocket gave him the address of the closest school. It was in Warsaw. Roner memorized it, got his agent to arrange a booking in the Polish capital, and paid a visit to this institute of higher education.

A withered little man he had been told to see examined his hands; then Roner was led to a dressmaker's dummy. It was dressed in a waistcoat and jacket. Roner was instructed to go to town on it.

"With all the dexterity I could muster," he asserts, "I dipped for the dummy's wallet. As I grabbed it, a bell suddenly rang. I looked up, scared. Then I saw the little man shake his head sadly. I was told the dummy was wired. A false move would set the bells off. It was part of the testing and training procedure."

Roner was told his approach was passable but his filching technique lacked refinement. Would they accept him as a pupil?

"Yes," the old man declared, "but it will take you about a year to become fully expert."

But he only had a four-week booking in Warsaw, Roner told the professor, and the latter shrugged.

"All right," he said, "I'll teach you and I'll see you in jail right afterward."

THE fee for the course was 1,000 zloty in Polish money, worth about two hundred fifty American dollars at the time. Classes were held in that tawdry little apartment, on Nalevky Street.

"From the start," Roner declares, "my instructor impressed me with this fact: technical movements were not, as I had assumed, the most important things to learn. What *was* important was to know from whom to steal, which victims were carrying the full wallets and which the skinny ones.

"After all, he insisted, it doesn't pay to dip for an empty purse—because once a pickpocket performs the act, he is committing a crime. 'Why take a single chance if it's not going to pay?' my instructor asked."

Roner was given some tips: hang around banks and post offices and watch for people who cash large checks and money orders; spot the fellows who flash big bankrolls in taverns and cabarets; keep eyes peeled for shoppers in the better stores who change big bills.

His final lesson was some memory work. He was given a list of names to learn by heart—names of lawyers in key European cities to whom he could go for help if he got into trouble. He didn't tell the professor that he wouldn't be needing such services.

AT the end, the professor delivered a sort of commencement address. He dwelt on criminal activity in the United States, cited the popularity of guns and violence in robberies, and declared, "The thieves over there do their stealing the easy way." He shook his head in disapproval. "No skill, nothing artistic about it. Ah, such a lack of talent!"

Roner nodded consolingly and left with the professor's blessing. For some time after, he practiced his new skills; then, when he was sure of himself, he pulled the card-in-the-wallet stunt. It went over beautifully.

The art he learned not only improved his act, but may even have saved his life. In 1938, after the Nazi hordes swept through Austria and annexed it, Roner knew that his native land would no longer be healthy for him. He had been an outspoken foe of Nazism.

He and his wife managed to get aboard the last train to Yugoslavia before the Germans closed the border. But this proved to be only a temporary haven. He wanted to get to Belgium, where he had some bookings, and he had to go by way of Italy. At the Italian border, he noticed with a pang of fear that a customs guard was checking names of passports against a long list of names, people the Germans didn't want to slip through their fingers. Roner knew his name was on the list.

Then he saw another guard with a rubber stamp hanging from a cord pinned to his coat. As soon as the first guard okayed a traveler, the second would stamp his passport.

"Oh, Professor," he murmured to himself as he approached the guard with the stamp, "here's the pay-off for all your teaching." He engaged the guard in voluble argument and in a few minutes, Roner and his wife were on their way, passports duly stamped.

The guard thought he was just having a set-to with a dim-witted foreigner, but the little professor's pupil was watching for an opportunity to get his fingers on the rubber stamp and okay his own and his wife's passports. This he did.

They kept going until they reached the United States, where Roner resumed his career as an honest pickpocket.

How do American dips compare with the foreign variety?

"They take a back seat," Roner says. "Probably one reason is a lack of formal education—no schools for dips here as in Europe. The practitioners just pick it up by themselves. Another reason is that thieves figure they can get the haul more quickly by violence—mugging, stickups and the like."

How does Roner himself manage to steal so swiftly and ably?

"Distraction is the secret," he explains. "And it's coupled with very light fingers. Jostle a man on his right side and his attention is immediately focused there. He doesn't feel the fingers edging into the pockets on his left."

How about summarizing a little of his professor's course? What are the real inside tricks?

Sorry, but Roner says nix. Police and District Attorneys yes, but others, no. It may sound silly, he says, but some joker might take it into his head to practice a little on a few strangers.

How can you guard against these boosters and cannons? What's an expert's advice?

Roner gives it gladly:

(1.) Never carry a big roll.

(2.) If you find that you must have a large amount of cash on your person, never flash it in a public place.

(3.) If a strange, playful drunk comes close to you in a bar, pretends you're a long-lost friend, and puts his arms around your shoulder, get your guard up as quickly as needles on a porcupine's back. He's feeling for your wallet. The same goes for jostling of any kind by a stranger. It takes an experienced man only a split second to find the bulge that tips him off.

(4.) Never put loose bills in your side pants pockets.

(5.) If you remove your jacket in a public place, take your valuables out of it.

(6.) If you're on the heavy side, be overly careful. Chances are that in the interest of comfort you wear loose-fitting clothes, and dips just love those.

(7.) Women should never leave handbags swinging on straps or leave them on seats or counters. A simple yet very effective way for a woman to foil a moll-buzzer is to carry her purse upside down, with her hand over the catch.

(8.) Finally, if you've got something to lose, be alert. Even the cleverest pickpocket in the world is stumped when his victim is waiting for him to spring.

Time and again Roner has proved the converse—that anyone *not* on his guard can be had.

Once, for instance, he showed up at a Midwestern prison to do a Christmas show for the inmates. To enter the jail—the one at Jackson, Michigan, by the way, where one of the biggest prison riots in the U. S. history erupted a few months later—a visitor must go through three heavy steel doors.

Roner and a guard walked through the first door. The guard locked it carefully, put the key away, and led Roner through the second door. Between the second and third doors is the "Eye," a fluoroscopic device which detects whatever a visitor may have in his bags or on his person. Before being subjected to it, Roner was quickly and expertly frisked by the guard.

When Roner stepped away from the "Eye," he asked curiously: "Why did you do this to me?" He swiftly passed his hands over the guard to illustrate what he meant by the question.

"I was looking for things you shouldn't be carrying," the guard replied. "Things like guns or keys."

"Keys?" Roner inquired innocently. "But I have a key."

"You have?"—sharply, eyes narrowing.

"Sure. Right here." And he held one up.

"For gosh sake!" the guard exploded. "That's the key to the prison!"

Roner had filched it while his hands were darting lightly over the guard.

There was the time, too, when Roner lifted Wendell Willkie's wallet. This brought hearty laughter from Bruce Barton, then in Congress. Barton chided Willkie by saying that the former Republican candidate would have made some President, letting money get away from him so easily.

Whereupon Roner turned to Barton and said: "You've got nothing to crow about." Then he handed Barton *his* wallet.

Despite all his years of dipping into other people's pockets, Roner never had anyone holler for the law. There was just one close call, and that was in Roner's Vienna days. After a performance, during which he had relieved a dozen persons of their watches and wallets, one of his "victims" demanded:

"Where is my watch?"

"You didn't have one," Roner told him. "I took your wallet and gave it back. That's all."

"I did have a watch," the man said indignantly, "and I want it back!"

Roner saw he was serious, but was convinced that the man had not had a watch. There was just one other possibility. Another, and less honest pickpocket had gotten to the "victim" first. But Roner didn't think this had happened. To check, he called the police and they all went to the man's home. Roner blew out his breath in a gasp of relief when he saw the watch on the night table. The man had forgotten to put it on.

As the final, conclusive proof that anyone, absolutely anyone, can be taken by a pickpocket unless on guard, Roner cites this case: During a show in Detroit, he pulled a disappearing-bill act. A number of people from the audience were on the stage at the time, and Roner handed one of them a ten-dollar bill. He told the individual to close his fist over it. When the fist was opened, the man found he was grasping a piece of tissue paper. Roner had simply palmed the bill, substituted the paper, and tucked the bill into his own jacket pocket to keep it out of sight.

Later, in his dressing-room, Roner reached in his pocket for the ten-dollar bill. It was gone.

"Some son-of-a-gun I called onto the stage," he moans, "was a real pickpocket!" •



"Busy, Lou?"


CJ



By VAN MacNAIR, JR.—It was easy. All he had to do was win the race and lose his girl—or lose the race and lose both his girl and his license.

THERE WERE NO CROWDS TO SEE HIM NOW. No grandstand; not even a railbird as he rode out onto the track. This wasn't Belmont, and it wasn't Hialeah or Garden State, or any of the big tracks that had known him. This was DeVoto's private training-track, and there was nobody at all to see him except the trainer, the track pony up ahead, and DeVoto walking beside him.

"Jog off a quarter, then drive from there," DeVoto said. "The horse has the speed—if you've still got the hands."

Illustrated by BOB FINK

The hands. Around the tracks they used to say he had hands that made a horse run faster than it knew how. What if the horses wouldn't run for him any more? Without horses he was a bum, a nobody. He looked down at the carefully tended mane of the horse. His name was Parsifal, and he was black, big-boned, strong.

DeVoto said, "He's got everything, but he's never won a race. You've seen a halfback in broken field? That's the way he runs. You know what I mean?"

Frankie knew. Instinctively, he reached up to adjust his cap before he remembered he wasn't wearing a cap. He was wearing an old sweater and his dungarees were stuffed into worn brown boots.

He reined Parsifal around and pulled up. The trainer and the track pony were waiting. DeVoto was waiting, looking at him and waiting. Suddenly Frankie laughed, and it came easily, in the old way, the way it hadn't come in a long time. He opened his mouth to explain, then stopped. He didn't need to talk now. In the instant that Parsifal began to run, he thought of Kit. If he was a nobody without the horses, without Kit he wasn't anything at all.

Later, but not much later, they sat in the tack-room. DeVoto couldn't keep his eyes off the stopwatch. He kept getting up and walking around while he talked and he kept coming back to stand and look down at the stopwatch on his desk.

Frankie said, "Where are you going to enter him?"

"I don't know. I don't know. I've got to get your license back first. Let's go over it again."

Frankie blew himself to a sigh. "Okay. I've got a steady job. Two years now I'm night-managing a bowling alley." Frankie stamped out his cigarette irritably. They had been over all this before and now some of the nervousness was coming back. "Listen—I told you. I'm clean. I'm clean ever since they took my license. No trouble with anybody. No scrapes. I've learned my lesson. What else do they want? My hide for a lampshade?"

DeVoto said, "All you want is a chance to make up for a hot-headed mistake? All you've lived for is to ride again?"

"I'm a jockey," Frankie said. The way he said it, it was enough.

DeVoto looked at the rafters, framing phrases in his mind. "Okay," he said after a while. "Get back to the city and go on back to work in the bowling alley like nothing's happened. There'll be some photographers and reporters around in a few days. I'll arrange it all—the publicity, the hearing with the Commission. Then—"

There was a spray of gravel as the Cadillac convertible whipped neatly into the parking space where a sign warned: TRACK OFFICIALS ONLY. The early mist had burned away and the sun, like a fat orange, rested just atop the grandstand roof. Already Frankie could feel it warming the leather seat. He could feel it in the small of his back through the sport coat. The Caddy, the sport jacket, the open-collared silk shirt—at least he'd managed to hang on to them. They made him look as if he'd never been away.

He cut the motor.

A horse he couldn't see went up the track at a gallop. He sat still, listening. His heart tightened. He felt all the old feeling.

"Okay, Mac—read the sign, huh?"

Frankie looked briefly at the old man in coveralls and a parking attendant's cap, leaning on a rake.

"The last time I was in here," Frankie said, "I tossed you a sawbuck."

The man's face said he could hear talk like that any day around a racetrack. Ten bucks. A thousand. A million, for that matter. He dropped his rake in the gravel. He walked with a limp.

Frankie said, "I'm Frankie Dee." He watched, knowing the old man's eyes would narrow, then open. They did.

"Yeah. I recognize you now. Sure. Frankie Dee. *Fancy* Frankie. I saw it in the papers. Welcome back, Frankie. The joint's all yours." His hand sketched a broad gesture. "Say," he said, "you know anything good today?"

Frankie considered. He crooked his finger. The old man bent forward quickly.

"Everything's good today," Frankie whispered. "It's Dee Day."

The old man, his eyes flat, his old-man's mouth working, started to turn away.

"Ah, wait a minute, Pops. Don't get sore!" Frankie flipped the keys from the switch, dropped them in his pocket and jumped out of the car.

"Happy Dee Day," he said. There was a five-dollar bill in his hand. He looked at it fondly, snapped it once, kissed it and gave it away. "Happy Dee Day, Pops."

"It's a pleasure to have you back, Frankie. A real pleasure, believe me." The old man's voice followed him thinly.

He walked toward the Dutchman's Kitchen. It was the same. The sights, the sounds, the smells, all the same: Coffee, and bacon frying in the early morning. A pipe being smoked out of doors. From one of the sheds a stable-boy singing. Among the few people that he passed, he saw no one he knew. Even so, he lifted a finger in greeting once or twice.

Inside the Dutchman's it was quiet. A stable-hand slept at a table near the wall with his head in the sunlight. Frankie straddled a stool beside two exercise-boys. He didn't know the new girl behind the counter. He watched her draw his coffee; then he drank it slowly, hearing vaguely the conversation beside him—the everlasting talk of exercise-boys. Talk of morning workouts. The eternal circling—the ceaseless pounding. Frankie remembered that. The older jockeys always warned you it would finally wreck your kidneys.

And then, clearly, he heard it. "I hope you get paid," the voice said. "Working for old man Stanly. He's always broke."

Frankie sat very still. He had hoped they would be here. He had half-expected it. "Claiming" Stanly would always be where the horses were running. And Kit would be with her father. For a moment it was like one of those movies where they stop the action in midair to show you how the high diver did it. It took a second for things to go on again.

Then the exercise-boy was saying, "I'll get paid. The old guy's got a stake—a horse all paid up to run in the Rainbow tomorrow. He must've had some dough for that. I'll get mine."

Frankie Dee stood up. He didn't ask the exercise-boy where to go—he didn't have to. Down at the far end of the long line of barns were the long-shot, one-horse stables. That was where owners operated out of beat-up trunks. That was where hope sprang eternal. Somewhere down there, he knew, he would find Kit and her father. After two years there was no need to hurry. Frankie walked slowly, remembering.

Jamaica on a rainy day, two years ago. He had won the first race and had a win ticket worth close to a grand. The ticket was for Kit and the old man, because the horse he had collared in the stretch and beaten by two lengths belonged to them.

"A little present for you, baby," he said.

"A present?" Kit looked down at the ticket that he was trying to give her.

One thing only I believe in a woman—that she will not come to life again here after she is dead.

—ANON.

"Sure. Stick with Fancy Frankie and you'll always have the winner." Kit stood there looking down at his hand. Frankie waited, grinning. It was a crazy thing to have tumbled for her, really. A jockey riding the best horses in the country could have any one of a hundred classy dolls. "Go on, take it," he said. "You proud, or something?" Then he added, "Want to make it a wedding present?"

She took it. She reached out and took it and tore it to little bits in his face. Then she turned on him, with her eyes hot, with bitterness in her voice. And sorrow, too. The trouble was that sorrow was not an emotion he had yet learned to recognize. That came later, after he had saddled up, and ridden out onto the track for the fifth race. Egg-shaped Jamaica, with its sharp turn, with the veil of mist making it hard to see, and if that weren't bad enough, a big field of horses going to the post in the fifth. Even in the half-light, wearing his rain silks with his arm number obscured, he had been recognized by a round of applause as the horses went up the track to the gate. But he barely heard it. His ears were still hot with the biting sound of Kit's words.

"You're just a name, Frankie. Fancy Frankie Dee, a big name in the papers, the magazines, the radio, the racing sheets! A couple of million people keep reminding you of it. A man might be able to forget that, but you're just a name and not a man. In a husband, I want a man!"



Kit stood there, looking at him. Frankie waited, grinning and holding the ticket. "Want to make it a wedding present?" he asked. "Stick with Fancy Frankie and you'll always have the winner." Kit looked at him; then she reached out and took the ticket and tore it to bits.

THE anger inside him burst with the opening slam of the starting gates. It must have blinded him. He hardly saw the furious, startled faces of the other riders as he slammed into them, scattering them. Torn bits of curses flung away in the wind. He cursed back, screamed back. Careening down the backstretch, he screamed anything he could remember from the tenement sidewalks. It didn't matter what. He was raging. Around the turn and into the stretch the race was forgotten. He was hurt and all he wanted to do was to hurt back, to slash back at something. In the stretch, the boy riding the horse beside him was the nearest thing. He struck.

The details remained always with him: Things like the tiny veins in the jockey's nose, the bright blood as he laid the rider's face open with his whip, again and again. When it was over, he was drained, empty, bewildered. Somewhere in the angry confusion that followed, he began to know sorrow.

Only DeVoto's help kept him from being barred for life. Finally, the Commission suspended him indefinitely.

But if there was only so much good luck, there was only so much bad luck, too. He had gone away from the tracks to wait, believing that, and it had been true. Now the waiting was over. He wondered if Kit had heard the news. Aware of sudden nervousness, of tightness in his chest, he walked slowly.

She was sitting on an overturned tub, wearing blue jeans, reading the *Racing Form*. Her back was turned to him. He stopped three feet from her and hid his hands in his pockets. Her back had been turned to him the last time he'd seen her, he remembered.

"Hello, Kit." He heard himself say, and saw her stand up, turning with that quick, slim movement he remembered so well. She's prettier than ever, he thought, and he smiled to himself.

Frankie said, "You're prettier." There was a patch on the toe of her boot.

"You might have let me know where you were."

"I didn't want you to see me."

"Because you weren't Fancy Frankie any more? Just because you were down on your luck?" Abruptly, Kit sat down on the overturned wooden tub. "Oh, Frankie—" She tossed her head. "You'll never grow up, I guess. Never."

Frankie looked at her patched boot.

"I had to come back first. I'm a jockey, Kit. Without that I'm nothing. You see that?"

"I— Oh, Frankie, I don't know. I—"

"For me there's never been anything else. Is that so childish?"

"I don't know. I said I didn't know—let's drop it."

"All right," Frankie said. "If it makes you jumpy." Something was making her jumpy, all right. She couldn't keep still. There was a new edge to her voice. "Forget it, baby," Frankie said. "It's dropped."

Frankie said, "How's your father?"

"Older. He's had it, Frankie; the last year was rocky."

Frankie could imagine that. H. J. Stanly's wife had died years ago, and since then he lived for just two things—this girl she had left to him, and the horses. Claiming Stanly, the track regulars called him. The claiming race is run for horses whose owners have agreed to sell them for a stated price—usually a relatively cheap price—so to claim a horse is to bet the owner has misjudged its value. His devotion to this doubtful theory had won for Claiming Stanly his name, a

succession of bad-legged platers, and a precarious livelihood.

"But I hear you've got a horse good enough to go in the Rainbow tomorrow," Frankie said, recalling the conversation in the Dutchman's.

Kit nodded. "Clover Boy. HJ picked him up in a Florida scrambles. They say everybody's due a break, and this is it. We're the class of the field."

The Rainbow Handicap was a twenty-five-thousand-dollar race. At the thought of Kit and HJ winning a purse like that, Frankie felt a warm glow spread in him. He rose, and pulled Kit to her feet with a quick movement. "Luck!" he said.

Kit was smiling and holding up crossed fingers for him to see. What he saw sharply, instead, was her smile. It was drawn and strained, not like Kit's at all.

At the entrance to one of the big, green-painted barns in the upper end of the stable area, Frankie turned in. DeVoto's trainer was stooped over, bandaging the left foreleg of a big black horse. Frankie stopped. It was the first time he'd seen Parsifal since the training-track ride.

"How's blackie, here?" Frankie asked.

"Fit," the trainer said. "The boss wants to see you." He jerked his thumb at the tack-room door. Frankie went through it, whistling. DeVoto sat looking at him from behind a big desk.

"How's your weight?" he asked.

"One-ten. I'm in shape."

"Good. You're going to ride." DeVoto tilted back in his chair and looked at the ceiling. Then the chair legs hit the floor as he swung forward and slapped the desk softly with the flat of his hand.

"Frankie, you're going to win a twenty-five-thousand-dollar race your first time out," he said.

Frankie cocked his head. "That's great. When?"

"Tomorrow."

Alarm lifted Frankie to his feet. "What race?"

"The Rainbow." DeVoto lit a cigar, and smiled around it at Frankie. "Two years out of it, and you come back like that. They'll love you."

Frankie walked around the desk and stared at a picture of Seabiscuit on the wall.

"That would be nice," he said with genuine regret. "But I can't do it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I won't ride Parsifal in the Rainbow. Any other race. But not the Rainbow."

"Sit down." DeVoto laid his cigar in an oversize ashtray. "I don't understand that. But I don't have to. I've got a horse that can't lose and nobody knows it. That horse will go off at long odds, and if you aren't on him to bring him home, there won't be any other race for you—ever."

Frankie stared at DeVoto. For a minute they stared at each other.

Then Frankie said hopefully, "The entries are closed. It's too late."

"Frankie." DeVoto's voice was pleasant again. "Why do you think I took the trouble to get your case before the Commission? Why do you think I went to all that trouble at this particular time? Because I can't get riders? I can hire a stableful! But not one that can ride Parsifal. I entered the horse the minute I found out you could handle him." DeVoto leaned back and regarded Frankie as if from a distance.

"Look, put him in a cheaper race—you could get the same odds, and against cheaper horses, he'd walk in. Talk about dough! You'd make yards of it."

"With you on him," DeVoto said, "the horse is ten lengths the best in the Rainbow. That way I pick up a nice purse, too." He was still leaning back, still considering Frankie from a long way off.

Frankie started to say something, then stopped. *I'll fake an injury. I'll be sick,* he thought.

DeVoto sat watching him. He said pleasantly, "Don't try anything funny, Frankie. You're still on probation with the Commission. You know who got your license back. You know who can give the word and get it lifted if there's any funny stuff."

Frankie tried again. "Give me a break—"

"I gave you one."

Frankie didn't answer. He stood up. There was still something he could do.

He found Kit in the barn, braiding Clover Boy's mane.

"Scratch him," he said tightly.

"Scratch him? Scratch Clover Boy? What do you mean?"

"I told you. Get him out of the race."

"Don't be a goose, Frankie. We've waited a lifetime for this."

"Then wait a little longer. Kit, you won't win. I worked Parsifal a half mile in forty-five and a tick. Two strides off the record. I *worked* him at that. Do you know what that means? You hear me?"

"Frankie," Kit said. "Sit down."

He sat with his back against the stable wall, and waited. Even before Kit began to talk he knew he had lost. *Dee Day,* he thought bitterly. He waited without hope. Even during the months on the ground, there had been hope.

"We can't back out," Kit said. "Here's something you don't know. HJ has to quit. 'Go away and take it easy,' they call it. You can imagine him when the doctors told him. Red in the face. 'Me! Fifty years on the turf—me, who remembers Sheepshead Bay and all the great horses! Where would I go?' "

Frankie wondered where he would go.

"Well, he's going to a steak house in Jersey. He's got a chance to buy halves. A man to run it. Not too far from the tracks. So, you see— Only there's not much time."

"You should have told me. You could have found me some way."

"Frankie, there's nothing you can do. Nothing anybody can do. No, Frankie, leave me alone. We'll win. We have to."

"No, you won't. Horses are my business. I'm telling you." Panic was rising in him. "Wait. Scratch him and wait."

"Wait!" And Kit whirled, brushing the back of her fist across her cheek, a gesture he remembered. Heat was rising in her throat. "Wait! There's no more time to wait. We've waited months. The race was hand-picked—the distance, the field, the weights. Everything in Clover Boy's favor."

"Except me and Parsifal. Where's HJ? Maybe he'll listen—"

"Out raising money to bet with. We're bridge-jumping on this one."

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DeVoto sat watching him and said pleasantly, "Don't try anything funny, Frankie. You're still on probation. You know who got your license back—and who can get it lifted again."

Frankie heard his own voice begging. He was begging her to bet on Parsifal. He had not begged many times in his life.

Kit faced him. "Do you really think we'd play it that way? Do you really?" Defiant now, distracted. Legs planted wide. Tucking in her shirt-tail. "I've got news for you, Frankie: You know a lot about horses, but not much about me."

He came into the jockeys' room, and it was the same as always: the guys riding the first race were dressing, a poker game in one corner, a pinochle game on the stone floor, a couple of half-dressed boys listening to the baseball game on the radio in front of the window. Outside the window, the sky blue and cloudless.

He went to his locker and sat down on a bench. There were some new riders he didn't know—kids for the most part, joking and laughing. Before long they would be shouting, snarling at each other, crowding into a turn, fighting for room. Some of the old pros came over and shook hands with him. They were riding in the Rainbow.

"Who's on Clover Boy?" Frankie asked. A dark Italian boy, young and serious-looking, was pointed out.

"He's got a good ride," someone said.

"He's the one to beat," said Frankie, and somebody else laughed, jeering, "Not by that goat you're riding."

So it wouldn't look phony if I lost, Frankie thought. Nobody expected Parsifal to do anything. Nobody but DeVoto.

The jockeys riding the first race went out to make weight, and the room was quiet except for the radio bringing in the ball game from Brooklyn, and the slap of cards on the stone floor.

I could bluff an explanation, Frankie thought. *"The horse got away. I couldn't hold him."* He had been playing with the idea for some time, but he knew it was hopeless. DeVoto had seen what Frankie could do on the horse. He wasn't taking anything else. And you couldn't blame him. DeVoto was on something good. He didn't mean to lose it.

THE first race was over. The riders trooped in. Now they were cursing each other, swearing to get even for dangerous riding, accusing each other of crowding.

Goddamned noisy kids! Why didn't they grow up?

"Shut up." Frankie was on his feet. *"Shut up!"* He sat down again and put his head in his hands. Hell, you'd think it was a nursery. The room was quiet. He could feel eyes on him.

After he was dressed there was nothing to do but watch the big electric

clock on the wall, watch the big red second-hand sweeping around. He could do that, and he could think of Kit. He squeezed his hands together hard. He kept seeing the patched toe of her boot. Through the window came a muffled roar. They were off in the second. . . .

Just when he decided, he never could remember exactly. Somewhere between the second and third races, probably. With the decision made, it was better. Even if he never rode again, he had to do what he felt. He sat quietly and waited, going back over old things in his mind.

"Riders in the seventh, Rainbow Handicap, make your weights."

He stood up. That was the call. Going down to the scales, he realized how wet were the palms of his hands. He took his tack from the valet, wondering what showed on his face. When the horses were saddled, De-Voto's groom made a hand for him, and he went up into the saddle. In the sunlight at the other end of the ring, he saw Clover Boy, big-boned, fit-looking, his bay coat gleaming.

Then Kit saw him. He thought she called, "I won't wish you luck," but he couldn't be sure. She was calling over the heads in the crowd, smiling, and he grinned back at her, nodding, as if he understood. He was thinking, *either way, it's all over.* They'll take the money and buy the restaurant. She'll end up marrying the head waiter. And Frankie Dee will be nursemaid to a bunch of bowling pins.

Filing around the ring, his knees high, his back bent, his hands in his lap, relaxed, he sized up the other horses out of old habit. There was a colt by Whirlaway, with the same touch of redness as his old man, but skinnier. Magician, with Atkinson up, looked skittish. Atkinson gave him a wave with his whip. War Game, moving out on the track with the number-one post position, had a fast break. But the crowd was betting Clover Boy. By the odds board in back of the ring, Frankie could see the figures: *Five to two,* Parsifal was thirty to one.

He reined to the left and started down the lane leading from the paddock to the track. Suddenly he felt a hand on his knee. He looked down.

"Get back in a hurry," DeVoto said, and there was no mistaking his meaning. Frankie nodded imperceptibly, and then he was out and going up the track. Ahead of him Anchor Man was dancing and rearing, already lathered with sweat. Frankie felt Parsifal take a strong hold, and held him tight with his hands.

With Frankie doing things subconsciously, they entered the starting gate. Talking quietly, as he had talked to high-strung horses hundreds of times before, Frankie eased Parsifal in.

"Move up, number seven, move up." The crash of the starter's amplifier rang harshly in his ears. Number seven was the Whirlaway colt, two horses outside Frankie. There were nine horses in the race. Parsifal had drawn the number-five position. Clover Boy was in three, standing quietly, full of run, but waiting.

Then there was a click and a slam as the Whirlaway colt broke out of the stall. It would take time to get him back in, and Frankie cursed to himself. He hated the waiting. It brought the tension flooding back. His mouth was dry, the way it was when he was going through a tight spot on the rail. Then suddenly it was quiet except for the tossing heads of the horses.

He was rigid when the bell rang. Hearing the slam of the doors against the posts, he swung forward. *"Eeeee-yah!"* He joined in the scream, and then they were all away and barreling. In the space of two minutes now it would be all over.

Glancing to his left, he saw nobody between him and the rail. Steering Parsifal gently, as if letting him have his own way, he eased toward the rail, feeling answering speed. There was no mistake, then. He could win it, easily. He knew that as they went past the stands for the first time, and he felt the crowd-noise, like a heat-blast, in his face. He turned his head, looking for Clover Boy. The Italian had him lying a trifle off the pace, running well. At the first turn they were all bunched behind Parsifal, and Frankie could hear the shouts of, "Room, gimme room to run." As Parsifal began to run out, Frankie pushed with his hands, evenly. Push, don't pull. That was part of the secret. Steer, don't haul. Parsifal straightened. Plenty of time yet, Frankie thought. His last ride should be a good one as long as possible.

Going into the backstretch, War Game drew even. Frankie nudged



"Why, hello, there! What's this one's name?"

Parsifal, and got more speed. A real running horse, Frankie thought regretfully as War Game's head bobbed rearward. The field strung out behind him, with three horses running abreast six lengths behind. War Game, the Whirlaway horse, and on the rail, Clover Boy. With the grandstand far away now, there was a sharp quiet, and Frankie could hear the steady thud of Parsifal's hoofs.

Halfway down the backstretch, Clover Boy moved. Frankie turned his head to watch him come, then drew Parsifal a few strides off the rail to let him through. Now they were coming into the last turn, the long highbanked turn that would bring them into the homestretch. It was, at last, time to do what he had to do.

All at once he eased the pressure, relaxed his seat, loosened his hands. Instantly, Parsifal began to pull out, jerking his head, hauling for the far side of the turn. Coldly, without emotion, Frankie wondered what DeVoto would be thinking. Frankie should be waving his whip in front of the horse's head. He should be leaning in, using his weight and leverage to pull the horse back. He should be using his hands. He did nothing.

And Kit. She knew enough about racing to see what he was doing, all right. He wondered how she was taking it.

The patched toe of her boot. He remembered that clearly. . . . The time he'd tried to give her the winning ticket as consolation for beating her horse. . . . He heard her voice, "You don't know much about me, Frankie. . . ."

He saw it then, how it was. Defeat might hurt her, but it never would destroy her. Riding there, high up on the turn, throwing the race to a horse that shouldn't beat him, he felt clearly his own smallness. Kit was too big, too good, too honest.

And then Frankie Dee flung up his right arm, and sent his whip whistling down close beside Parsifal's head. Pressing his knees in, swinging his weight far out of the saddle toward the inside of the track he thought of all the hard-mouthed horses he had handled. He prayed it wasn't too late to handle this one. He drew the reins far down on Parsifal's left side. His arms ached, and his wrists. Slowly, at first, then all at once, he felt Parsifal surrender. They were at the head of the stretch. Ahead of him Clover Boy, War Game, and the colt by Whirlaway were staggered back like ducks in flight. Flattening himself over the withers, his head tight against Parsifal's neck, Frankie began to drive—hard, then harder.

He felt like crying at the way the horse answered, his long reaching strides eating distance. Past the colt, then War Game coming back to him in long, even jumps. As he drove past, he felt the jockey's eyes appraising him behind his goggles. The barber-striped eighth pole flashed by. Two hundred and twenty yards now, and there was only Clover Boy in front of him, the Italian boy's green shirt looming large. He was aware of a roar, like running through a wind tunnel.

He was afraid to hope, but he had no fear of DeVoto now, even if he lost. That had nothing to do with it. He was whispering, "Get home, baby, get home." Then he heard the noise die away to a whisper and he knew they were across the line.

He stood straight up in the saddle, and pulled hard at the reins. Finally he looked back. The winning number was going up in the golden lights of the infield tote board.

Number Five.

Number Five was Parsifal.

There was a melee of pushing, of people slapping his back, of flashlight bulbs in the winner's circle. There was a brief moment of ecstasy, and then he was only drained and dry as he turned to watch Clover Boy going off the track.

DeVoto came and posed for the cameras beside the horse. He said to Frankie, "Okay, you won it." He reached up and tucked something in Frankie's shirt pocket.

"No hard feelings," the horseman said. "That's a hundred-dollar win ticket. It's worth quite a bit of money."

Frankie took the ticket from his pocket and handed it back to DeVoto. "Do me a favor," he said. "Look up a friend of mine. Kit Stanly. She'll be down in the public stables. Give her the ticket. And listen—tell her it's a loan. A loan—understand."

Walking to the scales, he hoped emptily that it would be enough to salvage something for them—Clover Boy, at least. He hoped that some day Kit would understand. That was all.

As before, the parking lot was nearly empty, and the Cadillac, as before, was parked in the space reserved for track officials. *A childish gesture,* thought Frankie Dee, walking wearily. *How silly can you get?*

"There's a dame waiting to see you, Frankie," said the old man with the parking-attendant's cap, and Kit Stanly stepped away from the side of the Cadillac. She stepped out of the shadows and there was, Frankie saw sadly, the winning Number-Five ticket in her hand, and in her eye, reproach.

"Offering me loans," she said, "when what I want is a wedding present."

"A wedding present?" Frankie echoed.

"I saw what you did today, Frankie. I saw you grow up."

He saw then. He saw HJ taken care of by all the winning purses to come. He saw, too, Kit, coming toward him with her arms held out. •

FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY

When Benito Mussolini decided to enter World War II in 1939, one of his first offensives was an air onslaught against the Island of Malta, the British Mediterranean stronghold, lying a mere sixty miles to the south of Sicily.

A few hours after the declaration of war, Savoia Marchettis of the Royal Italian Air Force started dropping bombs over the tiny island.

To offset this onslaught, the Royal Air Force found itself with three old-style Gladiators which had a maximum speed of 150 mph. These were the only aircraft on the island at the time.

The three planes lasted only one week, during which they were hardly given any rest at all except for refueling. They intercepted the far superior Italian craft and, together with the antiaircraft guns, kept the cowardly Fascist planes at high altitudes. This, of course, made it hard for them to bombard accurately the military installations and shipyards which make the island a strategically important base in the Mediterranean.

By the time the Hurricanes arrived from England only one of the three Gladiators was still in service. Of the other two, one was shot down over the sea, while the other crash-landed into a stone quarry at Luqa airport. With the arrival of the faster Hurricanes, the last of the three was grounded.

However, such sterling service did not go unnoticed by the garrison and people of Malta. The one remaining Gladiator was placed in the Palace Armory in Valletta, where the thousands of visitors may see it; and the three glorious planes went down in the history of the Island by the names of Faith, Hope and Charity. *—Vincent J. Mallia*



ANYTHING FOR A LAUGH

By CHARLES SAMUELS

Or a line in the papers. That was Bert Nevins' philosophy in the bygone days of screwball press agents. Now stunt men have become reserved . . . and a lot of joy has gone out of life.



Human Slave Market, Nevins set-up at Palisades, N. J., got wide notice when law stepped in to end "slavery."



Crowds mean publicity, so Nevins drew crowds. Here, attraction was Shipwreck Kelly stunt (opposite page).

Nudest Nude contest, product of Nevins' nimble noodle, brought in business for client, also brought sheriff.



ONE DAY SEVERAL YEARS AGO a few people strolling along New York City's 42nd Street happened to glance upward toward the top of a skyscraper, and what they saw froze them in their tracks.

A man was inching his way out over the edge of the building. Except for a short plank protruding over the edge of the building, there was nothing between the man and the rock-hard sidewalk but thirty stories of air.

Ordinarily, such an incident can mean only one thing: Someone is trying to commit suicide. And when such things happen, in New York or any other city, the affair quickly assumes mammoth proportions. More pedes-

trians came to stop and stare, and soon the street was blocked with people. At a nearby building, cameramen set up their equipment and began taking pictures.

The man in question, though, was not trying to die. He was trying to sell doughnuts.

He eased himself out on the plank, grasped a crossbar, and calmly executed a headstand. Then, just as nonchalantly, and still in his inverted position, he proceed to eat thirteen doughnuts, thereby proving, among other things, that doughnuts taste good.

The man, of course, was a professional daredevil, none other than the one-time famous flagpole sitter, Alvin (Shipwreck) Kelly. The man who put him up to this stunt, and paid him $50 to carry it out, is a roly-poly press agent named Bert Nevins. One of the last of a dying breed of stunt press agents, Bert will go to almost any ends—or at least he would have, in days gone by—to promote a client's products. Blessed with a fantastic imagination and an incredible ability to think up daffy stunts, Bert has put roller skates on a turkey and taken the clothes off of some toddlers to promote, respectively, Thanksgiving and diaper services.

His fertile brain has conceived kissing marathons and a "Human Slave Market"; he has trussed up a baron, a *bona-fide* one who was slightly down on his luck, and dumped him in a park; he has engineered underwater marriages, a merry-go-round marriage, and a marriage on a high wire, all in the interests of publicity.

He bas even arranged tbings so that, on occasion, he has been thrown into jail, sometimes without adequate plans for getting himself out.

BERT is a product of an era, the gay and goofy Nineteen-Twenties. He came up in the days of Lindbergh and Will Rogers, of Texas Guinan and Al Capone, of Pola Negri and Clara Bow and Ruth Snyder and Frankie Yale. Those were the days of Andrew Mellon and his millions, of Daddy Browning and his Peaches, of great men and fabulous beauties, geniuses, cops and robbers, and screwballs.

Stunt press-agentry was in its heyday, and such things as the League of Nations and German reparations regularly were driven off the front pages by the fascinating and the eccentric. There were tree-sitters, flagpole marriages, dippy inventors, and wacks of all kinds and types. Their daffy doings—in a good many cases, anyway—didn't just happen; they were manufactured to order by press agents, to whom no feat was too ridiculous or bizarre. One of the most legendary ones, Harry Reichenbach, even went to the trouble of smuggling a live lion into a New York hotel, where he registered as T. R. Zann, all to promote an early Tarzan movie.

Bert Nevins became a press agent in this dipsydoodle era, and he was one of the best. He's still going strong today, but along a more dignified—and far more prosperous—line. He now has a suite of offices on West 42nd Street in New York, more than a dozen people working for him, and a door sign announcing:

BERT NEVINS, INC.
PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

"Business is great," he said wistfully when I interviewed him. "I have big-money clients now. But I don't dare pull any daffy stunts any more. Why not? Let me tell you the whole story and you'll be able to see for yourself why I'm laying off the wacky stuff I love so much."

Nevins said he was born forty-two years ago in New York. His father was an embroidery manufacturer. "I'm the only human oddity," he told me, "in my solid, highly respectable family."

Bert first realized the possibilities of news-making as a career while he was a third-year college student, studying journalism and drama criticism at New York University. On the side he'd been picking up a very small buck or two, covering sports like swimming and tennis for various New York newspapers. Occasionally, he did a feature for Bernarr Macfadden's *Daily Graphic.*

The trouble with the sports assignments, Bert explained, was that he was paid only $2 to $2.50 in space rates, and no expenses. Often it cost more to travel to an assignment in Montclair, N. J., or some place in Westchester County than he was being paid. When rain postponed a tennis match his papers would run only a line or two about it and, as he was working on space rates, this was always a disaster.

On rainy days Nevins tried to break even at least by writing in Grantland Rice style, "Under gray leaden skies yesterday, the boys in the locker-room . . ." and so forth, but his editors seemed to think that one Grantland Rice was enough. Thereafter, many of his dispatches were more notable for their interest than for their factual accuracy. When he covered swim meets, for instance, he always had the winner of the big race of the day break some record—the pool record, the Eastern States record or some other. Naturally, this got him more space, and hence more money.

"For a while," he says, "I never covered a meet in which at least one record wasn't reported broken. The winner didn't kick, nor the runner-up nor the promoters. All the reporters were doing it. We had to eat, if only occasionally."

Oddly enough, it was a grim event that started Bert pinwheeling off on his journalistic career. He was the only reporter covering some tennis matches at Briarcliff Lodge, in Westchester County, the day a mayor of Yonkers dropped dead while playing golf on the club's course. Bert rushed to the scene of the tragedy, looked at the corpse and raced back to the clubhouse to phone the news to all the New York newspapers.

Almost hysterical at getting his first news break, Bert gave the story to one paper after another, and kept "improving" on the details. The late mayor bad died on the second hole. Bert made it the fourth for one paper, the seventh for another and the eighteenth for a third. Though the Yonkers mayor had said nothing as he toppled over dead, Bert had him murmuring, "At last, thank God, I made it under par."

NEVINS explains: "I was very conservative in those days, and I didn't go as far as to say the mayor had just made a hole-in-one and had passed away from ecstasy. I got fifteen dollars in all for that scoop. Not as much as the undertaker got but, after all, I didn't have to handle the body."

Bert quit N.Y.U. soon after that to become a reporter or a press agent or both, if possible. He started operations at a desk in the office of his father's embroidery factory in mid-Manhattan.

Ed Sullivan, who is now a syndicated columnist and TV's Great Stone Face, was then the *Graphic's* sports editor. Once in a while he gave Bert a free-lance assignment. Before long Bert also was doing publicity for the Cascades Swimming Pool, for a magazine devoted to swimming, and for a plastic surgeon, Dr. Gregory Pollack. The doctor, a friend of Bert's, was a disciple of Voronoff, the physician who claimed he could restore the potency of aging men by transferring monkey glands to their discouraged bodies.

Wben Bert was hired for $50 a week to work as a press agent in the 1928 Wrigley Marathon Swim in Toronto, Canada, he saw an opportunity to work in almost all of his clients on the promotion. He got Sullivan to assign him to the race for tbe *Graphic.* A newspaper never handicapped by good taste, the *Graphic* specialized in exploiting the lurid, the sensational and the ridiculous. After arriving in Toronto, Nevins wired the *Graphic* a series of stories describing how Dr. Pollack had come to the Canadian

city to inject large quantities of virility serum into contestants to give them the extra energy to finish the twenty-five-mile swim and earn some of the $50,000 in prize money.

Not long afterward Bert discovered that many of the three hundred entries came from towns whose newspapers had not sent reporters to cover the event. He promptly wired all these newspapers to say he would be glad to represent them at their usual space rates. About one hundred papers gave him that job.

Bert then sat down and made one hundred copies each of three different telegrams, filling in the names of the contestants and their home town papers later on. The first telegram read:

> JOE GALOOF, OF GALLIPOLIS, OHIO, TODAY ARRIVED IN TORONTO FOR THE WRIGLEY SWIM AND WAS GREETED BY THE MAYOR AND WRIGLEY SWIM OFFICIALS AT THE RAILWAY STATION STOP MR. GALOOF IS CONSIDERED A DARK HORSE WHO MAY WELL WIN THE $25,000 PRIZE IN THIS ANNUAL AQUATIC CLASSIC.

The second telegram, sent a few days before the August race, noted that Joe Galoof was zealously training. The third telegram was sent when the race started; it disclosed that the home-town boy had jumped into the water fearlessly and struck out along the five-mile oval course with impressive determination and energy.

The method seemed so efficient that Nevins made up two more similar books of telegrams. One had alternate wires telling either how the home-town boy had completed the first five-mile lap or had been dragged out of the "icy cold waters" over his own protests. The final book's alternate telegrams told whether he had finished ten miles of the race or given up the struggle.

"After that," says Bert, "I didn't think I'd need any books. The temperature of Lake Ontario that day was 52 degrees. And nobody finished, the last man to be taken out of the water being Vercotter, the German, who quit at the eighteen-mile mark. But I kept sending the *Graphic* wires about Dr. Pollack reviving the half-dead swimmers with his marvelous serum."

For his frenzied efforts, Bert made more out of that race than any of the swimmers. Besides his $50 a week, he got $75 from Dr. Pollack and about $500 from all the newspapers he'd serviced.

When he got back to New York he rushed down to the *Graphic* office, expecting to be congratulated and embraced by Ed Sullivan. But the tabloid's sports expert looked as though he'd just been hit by lightning, an impression he still gives strangers. Sullivan came out of his coma on seeing the grinning Bert and bawled him out for fifteen minutes.

Nevins' virility-serum story had run in only one edition before Bernarr Macfadden had angrily ordered it dropped. "We both forgot," said Ed, "that Mr. Macfadden hates doctors. He particularly despises monkey-gland and virility-serum specialists."

When Nevins, somewhat chastened, got home, there was a letter waiting for him. It came from a Baltimore paper, one that he had represented, and it began: "Yours was the most astounding service we've ever had." The letter went on to say that a Baltimore swimmer (Bert had wired that he looked like a possible winner at the five-mile mark) had called up the city editor to ask, "How am I doing in that race up there in Toronto?" It turned out that he'd sent in an entry blank, but had been unable to go to Canada. The swimmer said it had been a miraculous experience to sit in his Baltimore home and read of his aquatic achievements in a marathon race staged so far away.

"I was more careful in my journalism the following year," said Bert wistfully. "The second time I got a string of papers I checked to make sure the home-town boys had at least arrived in Toronto."

During the years of the Depression, Bert did very well with his freakish publicity stunts. After he got his hotel office (he got it free by doing the hotel's publicity) he sent out letters by the hundred, asking, "Do you want me to do your publicity for $25 a week?" He says he got two or three jobs for each hundred letters he mailed, many from "the kind of doctors who advertise for patients in newspapers."

From time to time he also got more lucrative accounts, including Broadway's Roseland Ballroom, Philadelphia Jack O'Brien's Gymnasium, Palisades Amusement Park, at Fort Lee, N. J., across the Hudson from Manhattan; Small's Paradise, a Negro night-club in Harlem, and the respectable-sounding New York Schools of Music.

Nevins says he first discovered that starting a controversy was the greatest news-space-getting gimmick when he had Arthur Cremin, of the New York Schools of Music, denounce the music in Walt Disney's classic movie short, "Three Little Pigs," as very bad for the musical upbringing of the nation's tots. He heated up the dispute by sending telegrams (signed with fictitious names) to the music editors of papers, demanding that they stop the showing of the picture "Three Little Pigs" before the musical taste of the whole younger generation was debased and destroyed forever. Disney himself indignantly answered Cremin and his other critics. The story ran for three days, during which time Cremin's schools were mentioned in print more than twenty times.

Shortly afterward Nevins started a newspaper controversy on behalf of another client, the Mayfair Mannikin Academy. He got the student models there to picket a society fashion show at the very doggy restaurant, Voison's, and other high-hat joints where society girls were modeling for charity. Bert supplied the "downtrodden" professional models with signs denouncing the society girls for taking the bread right out of their mouths by appearing as models for sweet charity's sake. At this, the society women snapped back in sulphurous rage, and the argument went on in the papers, to Bert's great content, for five whole days.

Though Nevins was starting to make a lot of money with his daffy ideas, he was also stubbing his professional toe on stunts more than occasionally. He shivers today every time he thinks of the first of these mishaps. This was in connection with his labors on behalf of the Harlem night spot, Small's Paradise. The first time he brought the proprietor a one-line item he'd got into a column about that night-club, Mr. Small said "Read it to me, son."

"From that," says Bert, "I knew the colored night-club man couldn't read. The next week, hoping to get raised from $25 a week to maybe $50, I brought him a big stack of clippings. There was only one thing the matter with them; they didn't mention his club. But I figured it wouldn't be too tough to 'read' them, making up all the things I would like to have printed about the Paradise if I'd been able to swing it. But instead of telling me to read them, Mr. Small said, 'Just leave 'em here, son.' He had somebody else read them, and discovered I had brought him clippings about ship sailings, lacrosse games and cooking recipes.

"There were a lot of mobsters hanging around that club and Mr. Small was supersensitive about his illiteracy. He might have had me knocked off by one of his friends, just as a favor. But the next time he saw me, he said 'Don't come 'round here no more, son!' And that was the end of that."

A few months later Bert cooked up a complicated and ingenious trick to publicize Philadelphia Jack O'Brien's Gymnasium, which at one time had occupied the roof of old Madison

Square Garden. It required the co-operation of another press agent who was handling a burlesque house that called itself, rather ambitiously, the National Winter Garden.

The plot ran like this: The two publicity whiz-bang boys bought a lot of cloth banners reading "Appearing in Person, the One and Only Philadelphia Jack O'Brien, Formerly World Light-heavyweight Champion." They then went down to the Bowery and found a rum-soaked bum who looked enough like Mr. O'Brien to impersonate him on the stage, and could stand up long enough to do it. This was not too hard to do as both Philadelphia Jack and plenty of Bowery bums had broken noses, punched-in cheekbones and cauliflower ears.

They bought the bum a new suit, dusted him off a little, hung up the banners and walked him on the stage. Then Nevins summoned a policeman from the street and complained to him that a perfect stranger was having the audacity to pretend to be his great and good friend, the real Philadelphia Jack O'Brien. The cop went into the burlesque house and, after modestly averting his eyes when the strippers came onstage to do their bumps and grinds, listened to the bum's spiel.

"He looks like Philadelphia Jack to me," he said.

"He's an impostor!" hollered Bert Nevins. "I'll get the genuine Philadelphia Jack O'Brien down here to prove it to you."

"You sure Mr. O'Brien didn't have no twin brother?" asked the policeman.

Bert assured him of that and telephoned O'Brien, who had been waiting, up in his Gym, for the call. Bert had instructed the old fight champ to come down, look his impersonator over, and then great-heartedly slip him ten bucks and plead with the cop not to arrest him.

When O'Brien got to the National Winter Garden he followed the script perfectly. Gently, he rebuked the fake Philadelphia Jack, gave him $10, and compassionately told him to go and sin no more.

"Don't arrest him, Officer," he told the cop, "He—" Then he stopped short for the policeman was crying like a baby. "You was always my favorite scrapper, Mr. O'Brien," the officer whimpered. "What a left you had, Mr. O'Brien! I saw you knock out Bob Fitzsimmons the night you won your title in 1905!"

Wiping away his tears, the policeman said with a sob, "And I know a great fighter like you wouldn't like anything about this disgraceful affair to get into the papers. I'll fix it with the desk sergeant so he won't make a report on it, Mr. O'Brien. That way the reporters will never hear one word about it."

He pressed O'Brien's hand, and frustrated the two press agents and Philadelphia Jack by keeping his word.

This fiasco convinced Bert that the only way to insure a pinch on stunts involving an arrest was to get collared personally. Then, if it was necessary, he could always bribe the cop to take him to the station-house. The first time he tried that was in behalf of a roller-skating rink. Just before Thanksgiving one year he put a turkey on roller skates on the roof of the hotel where he had an office, and had pictures taken of the unfortunate bird.

He knew that the newspapers will print almost any novel photograph of a turkey just before Thanksgiving, but there was no way to make certain they'd mention his rink unless he got arrested in connection with the stunt. So Bert had someone call up the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which got the police up there on the roof immediately. They carted Bert, the turkey, and the roller skates off to the nearest station-house. The date for his trial was set *after* Thanksgiving.

"This was a lucky break," says Bert, "because one or two of the papers ran long comical stories defending me. The stories said I was really that turkey's best friend because I'd saved him from being cooked on Thanksgiving Day."

Some of Bert's daffiest stunts were staged at Palisades Park. One year he put on a high-diving contest and got a girl named Viola Blake to announce that for practice she was going to jump off George Washington Bridge which spans the Hudson River from New Jersey to New York.

"I knew the vigilant cops there would never let her get off the bridge, but figured the camera boys would have their pictures by the time the police got there."

Bert saw a dozen men at the middle of the bridge when he stopped his car there. He thought they were from the newspapers, and said, "Wait a minute, boys, till Viola gets her clothes off." The dozen all turned out to be New York and New Jersey detectives and they rushed Bert and his diving beauty to the police station.

"Story got in the papers," Bert says laconically, "but I can't say it was much of an ad for my diving contest. I did much better with 'The Human Slave Market' I had at that amusement park. I saw a lonely-hearts magazine and thought I'd have a lonely-hearts group at Palisades. I had about twenty men and women—all but one woman was a plant, people we had to pay—walking around in this little space with signs on them, reading 'I have $5,000 for the man of my dreams.' or 'I have a job, $3,000 in cash and a cottage for two, mortgage-free, for the right woman.' I also had a barker out front, with an auction block, who pretended to be taking bids on the lonely-hearts specimens.

"The newspapers and newsreels were attracted, also two detectives whom I took to lunch, saying they looked famished, while the boys were getting their pictures. I turned them over to my boss, telling him to stuff the coppers with food and whisky.

"By the time I got back to The Human Slave Market, an assistant of Johnny Breslin, the Bergen County, N. J., prosecutor who has jurisdiction there, came dashing in and yelled, 'In the name of John Breslin, I proclaim that slavery has been abolished in the United States and therefore the perpetrators of this crime are under arrest.'

"I had known there would be a pinch, but expected it from the cops, not Breslin. The Paramount News cameraman, Douglas Dupont, thought this appearance of the Assistant D.A. was all part of the act, and said, 'Say that again, feller. I didn't have my microphone plugged in.' Well, this assistant prosecutor automatically began all over again, 'In the name of John Breslin, duly elected prosecutor of—' Dupont interrupted him again, saying, 'Come a little closer to our mike, will you?' That burned Breslin's assistant up. He yelled, 'I'm not an actor. I'm an official!'

"With Breslin prosecuting the park for re-establishing slavery and Palisades replying that it was only acting in the interests of love, romance and holy matrimony, the story got quite a nice play."

I asked Bert why he didn't use real lonely-hearts people. "Did you ever

WHAT A YOUNG MAN SHOULD KNOW

My son, beware the wiles of woman!
This creature's I.Q.'s almost human—
And, though you think you understand her,
Be careful of the line you hand her,
Or you may find that same gray down it
Has her nylons hanging on it.

—*W. W. Hatfield*

see any lonely hearts?" he asked. "If you have, you know why they are lonely. We had to have attractive 'slaves' in our market."

More often than not the authorities fail to co-operate with Nevins in his efforts to get publicity for his clients. When he handled Roseland he discovered there was a Baron Surini, a genuine but broke nobleman, working there as a male dancing partner for lady guests. At the time there was a big crime wave going on in New York and Bert decided to get some publicity out of this by tying up the high-born gigolo and leaving him in a park. Then he called up the police anonymously and reported seeing a man who appeared to have been robbed and trussed up, lying near a roadway.

"Why didn't you untie him?" asked the police sergeant who answered the telephone at the station house. Bert had to think fast.

"I didn't have time," he said, "I was taking a neighbor's wife to a hospital. She's having a baby."

THEN he stood on a corner near Riverside Park. Five police cars rapidly arrived and freed Baron Surini from his bonds. As Surini stepped into one of the police cars he saw Nevins and signaled to him by clasping his hands together that all was going magnificently. Surini told the police he'd been beaten and robbed. But not one word about this fake crime appeared in the newspapers the next day, or ever.

Bert was baffled until one newspaper came out with an editorial denouncing the New York police for suppressing crime news instead of crime. The news-suppression order had come from Headquarters two hours before Baron Surini was "kidnaped and robbed."

Nevins had much better luck in 1939 when he did the publicity for a New York World's Fair show called the Cuban Village. "This production," Bert says, "had two disadvantages; it was a clean show and it was at the far end of the Midway. Business was so terrible that I decided to put on a 'Nudest Girl' contest there with all the more gifted strip-tease performers from other shows at the Fair participating. The contest drew the biggest night's business we'd ever done at the Cuban Village. It also drew the police."

It so happened that the local sheriff was in the midst of a big controversy with Mayor Fiorello La Guardia just then about how much nudity was to be permitted at the Fair, where the side-shows were all going broke because the free shows put on by business concerns were so much more entertaining.

The Little Flower insisted that the sheriff stop the Nudest Girl contest. Glumly, the sheriff arranged with Bert that he would arrest him—as the provoker of all the shameless nakedness displayed that night—and one of the girls.

However, Lois da Fee, a gigantic stripper who was mad about any kind of publicity (she once married a midget to get her name in the papers) got very angry on the night of the flesh exhibition because the cops refused to arrest her. She was wearing only a brassiere and panties, and ripped them both off when the cops told her she was too dressed to warrant their taking her to the hoosegow.

"Now you *gotta* take me to the station-house," the Amazonian Lois insisted.

"No, we don't," the policemen told her. "You're too late. We got our orders who to arrest, and we've already put her in the pie-wagon. So you might as well get dressed, sister. Your nakedness will get you nowhere, at least not in the papers."

The arrested girl a few days later pleaded guilty and paid her fine. Bert, to keep the story alive, refused. He'd just got married and his wife wasn't very enthusiastic about this example of his devotion to duty, even though she was unable to talk him out of the idea of standing trial. When the case came to court Bert's father-in-law, an attorney named Emmanuel Cahn, defended him. To Bert's delight Mayor La Guardia sat as the magistrate. The Little Flower kept reading a law-book as Mr. Cahn put in an impassioned defense, including an argument that if nudity was all right for Adam and Eve it should not be shameful for us, their descendants.

When he got all finished, La Guardia put down his law-book, and said to Bert, "Thirty days and $50 fine." Bert got pale, until the Mayor, after a significant pause, added, "I will suspend the jail sentence."

Bert has created some of his best publicity breaks by staging marriages in the most unlikely places. He's prevailed upon couples who were not averse to publicity to get married under water in swimming pools, on merry-go-rounds, scenic railways, on a high wire. Five years ago he got a couple and a preacher to go under the waves of the Atlantic in a diving bell to get hitched. The bell was an amusement device owned by a Nevins client, the man who runs the Steel Pier at Atlantic City.

PURELY by accident, the Shipwreck Kelly doughnut-eating stunt became one of Bert's biggest news breaks. The New York *Daily News*, which has the largest circulation of any American newspaper, gave its entire front page to a picture of the upside-down Kelly.

It all stemmed from the fact that a baking company had hired Nevins to boost the sale of doughnuts. Bert promptly wired Shipwreck Kelly, who at one time was this country's outstanding flagpole-sitter. But there hadn't been much demand for Kelly's services recently and all he had left from the fortune he'd made was one extra pair of sox and his huge scrapbook of clippings.

BERT explains, "I was doing that stunt exclusively for the newsreels. The cameramen were at windows across the street, geting good shots of Shipwreck.

"But while he was eating his eighth doughnut I looked down and the whole street was blocked with people staring up. Noting the huge crowd, the *Daily News* sent photographers out and got a wonderful camera study.

"That stunt was not only good for me but it brought Shipwreck Kelly back into prominence. He made a good living after that for two whole years, eating doughnuts on the roofs of super-markets while standing on his head."

There are not many occasions any more for Bert to let his giddy imagination run wild that way. As he explains it:

"You might say I'm a victim of success. I now have a ten-room duplex apartment on Riverside Drive, a Cadillac, and a weekly income that runs into four figures. The big business interests I now represent don't go for the screwball type of exploitation; they're full of reserve and want me to be their dignified public relations man.

"Besides, I'm scared the newspapers will get mad at me if I start pulling fast ones. The news-gathering industry is better organized now, and checks on you. It's hard to get away with anything spectacular or eccentric."

But there's no disguising the fact that it was more fun in the old days for men like Bert, and also for the reading public. By comparison, today's newspapers are dull. They're full of earth-shaking stories about important events—wars, the United Nations, miracle drugs, zillion-dollar foreign loans, and atom bombs. Seldom, if ever, do they publish stories about the zany, wild, nonsensical antics of the old-style press agents who gave the public such a good time.

Maybe it's the times; undoubtedly it's harder for people today to kick off the traces. But whatever the cause, the happy-go-lucky press agents with their exuberant love of life are dying out, and their passing is to be mourned. •

A Day in the Sun

He was young and inexperienced, but he was saltier than these two soreheads realized—in more ways than one.

• By JOHN D. MacDONALD

On Sunday morning Vince got up and went down to do some more work on the *Croaker*. Simmons had let him tie her up at his dock until Vince could get a place of his own. Everybody had been decent about it. He guessed it was a sort of game with everybody to see if he could actually get her running. Over at Garnell's Basin they had hauled her out for him. He'd scraped the bottom, done a good paint job on it. Micky Garnell was the one who'd got the old marine engine running, charging him only for parts. You take a twenty-foot tub about twenty years old, and it needs a lot of work if nobody ever took good care of it.

It was hot in the April sun. He stripped off his shirt. He was seven-



teen, sun-baked, lean, stringy and tow-headed, with pale eyes and square brown hands that looked too big for him.

Simmons' place was just inside the inlet, other side of the highway bridge. Cars roared by, rattling the bridge boards. Tough place to sleep at night, he thought, but he guessed old Simmons was used to it. Probably didn't even hear it any more.

He became aware that a car had stopped, and he guessed it was bridge fishermen. He kept on sanding. Put on some paint, and later in the day, if it dried fast enough there on the cabin roof, he decided he'd take her out into the Gulf and see if he could hit some of the macks. The Gulf was flat calm. No wind. Far out, clusters of gulls circled. Boats were already out there.

A shadow fell across him and he looked up. Two men stood there, two big beefy men with half-balding heads, bright shirts, slacks.

"This your boat, boy?" one of them asked in a Northern voice.

"Yes."

"*Croaker*, eh? That's a kind of a fish, isn't it?"

"Yes. Named it that way on account of the noise the engine makes."

"Run good?"

"Yes, sir. It runs real good now I've fixed it up."

"What's biting out there in the Gulf, boy?"

"They're getting macks and blues and ladies."

The heavier one was asking all the questions. He stood spread-legged, his hands jammed in his hip pockets. "How about taking us out there, boy?"

Vince stared at him. "I couldn't do that. I got no license to run a charter boat."

"You ever take your friends out, boy?"

"Sure, but—"

"This is Dave. Shake hands with Dave, boy. What's your name?"

"Vince."

"Okay, Vince. I'm Jerry. We know him now, don't we, Dave?"

"Sure. We're all friends," Dave said, speaking for the first time. He had a thin high voice.

"So you take your friends out, Vince. Show 'em how your boat runs.

Illustrated by JOHN FLOHERTY, Jr.



When we get back, why, maybe we give you a little gift. Friends give presents to each other. Give you this, maybe."

He took a twenty-dollar bill out of his wallet, held it in the sunlight for a moment then put it back.

Vince knew it was less than half a charter-boat fee. But it would be a nice thing to have. Get a new anchor rope right off. Rig up running-lights.

"I don't know," Vince said. "You'd have to have tackle. Stuff like that."

"Hell, we got boat rods and reels and line. What kind of lures you use out there?"

"Spoons. Number two and number three. And wire and swivels."

"Okay, we'll be back in about forty minutes, boy. We'll bring some stuff. Have a day of it. Sure you got gas enough?"

Vince nodded. "More than half full. That's enough."

They walked back to their big car. As it turned on the highway he got a look at the plates: Michigan plates.

THEY were back in a half hour. They had rods, tackle, beer, a small suitcase. They'd had a drink. "Hi, old pal," Dave said in his high voice. As they came aboard the *Croaker* it rocked under their weight. They stepped heavily and clumsily.

"Now go find those fish, Vince, old boy," Jerry said. Vince turned her over. The exhaust made a sputtering, mumbling sound. He went to the bow and cast off the line. He went to the stern and cast off the line. The *Croaker* began to swing in the tide. He hurried to the wheel, pushed the throttle ahead and the *Croaker* waddled out into the channel, chugged under the bridge and headed for the open Gulf. Vince felt he had performed the maneuver quite smartly.

He heard the men talking in low tones by the stern. Dave laughed shrilly. He looked back. Dave uptilted a bottle, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, handed the bottle to Jerry. Jerry wiped the neck of the bottle on the palm of his hand, took a long slug, slapped the cork back in. His bright shirt was stuck to his broad back.

Once Vince was satisfied with the heading, he slipped the noose over a wheel spoke and went aft.

The gulls were working about a mile out. As the men paid out the line he made a course correction, then turned, standing in the shade of the cabin roof to watch them. Fellow could make a nice thing out of charter boating. Be your own boss. The tip of Jerry's heavy rod dipped. The man reeled in rapidly, easily. A tiny blue runner about twice the size of the spoon had impaled itself. Jerry pulled it up out of the water and jerked the rod, snapping the tiny fish off. It glittered in the sun and fell fifty feet away.

Dave got the next two—macks, about three pounds apiece—and then things quieted. The gulls had dispersed. The men passed the bottle back and forth until it was empty and then heaved it over the stern. Their speech had thickened. Their heads were turning red in the harsh sun.

"What's the matter, Cap'n Vince? Where's all the fish?"

Vince made a long turn southward toward a distant clot of gulls. "They're out here," he said. "Just got to catch up with them."

Dave was holding his rod loosely. He got a hard strike. It was a small-sized crevalle jack.

"Boy, we want something big," Jerry said firmly.

"Not much big stuff out here. Cobia once in a while. Not often. That line you got is pretty heavy for this stuff."

"You didn't say anything about that before we left, boy."

"I didn't see the line until you came aboard."

"You made yourself a mistake, Cap'n Vince. Wouldn't you say he made a mistake, Jerry?"

"That's just what he did. Open up a couple cans of that beer, Vince. Take one yourself if you're thirsty."

"I got a water bottle, thanks."

Vince made a slow turn, following the gulls. The turn let the spoons sink a bit. An unexpectedly adventurous black grouper banged into Dave's spoon, put up his brief objection and came wallowing in with his mouth open. Dave horsed him over the stern and slapped him on the deck.

Suddenly a vast patch of water began to boil fifty yards off the port bow. Vince yelled, "Here we go!" He circled the school. Dave and Jerry both tied into respectable mackerel at the same time. They whooped and got them aboard and let out line and again hit a pair almost simultaneously. Between them they got about fifteen aboard before the school ducked and disappeared. They celebrated with more beer.

The men took off their shirts. Their beefy shoulders were as white as the underside of the mackerel.

Vince said, "You can get sick from sunburn on a day like this."

"Open me a beer, son," Dave said. "How the hell we going to get a tan down here if we don't get any sun?"

Vince shrugged. He handed them the beer. The white skin was turning pink before his eyes. They were both more than a little drunk. When Vince handed Jerry his beer, he could see the tiny water blisters that had appeared on the man's bald forehead.

The next strike was so hard and fast and vicious that Dave's rod nearly went over the stern. He recovered and set the hook. Vince raced to the wheel, turned hard toward the fish, yelled to Jerry to reel in.

The fish took line hard and fast and Dave fumbled with the star drag. "Leave that drag alone, you," Vince yelled. Vince watched the rod and knew that Dave had hit into a stray king. The king mackerel had gone north. This was a stray, and like most strays from the king schools, a respectable fish. Dave played it poorly. Vince left the motor at dead slow, took the gaff and went to the stern. He saw it at the surface sixty feet back. It was a good one.

He said, "Work him slow. Let him get tired. Then bring him back here where I can gaff him."

Dave grunted and sweated and pumped the rod. The king made a circling run and came in, fighting for each inch. Vince got a better look and figured it at close to forty pounds. A fine king. Hell, the record was fifty something.

Dave, like a fool, was pointing the rod tip down when he got the king close astern. "Hold your rod up!" Vince yelled. Dave snapped it up just as Vince made his lunge with the gaff. He saw the big head shake, saw the spoon twinkle away as the king got enough slack to throw it. The gaff hook caught. Vince tried to snatch the king aboard. The hook wasn't set right. The king came up out of the water and then the gaff pulled free. The king rested, near enough to touch, for a long half second, then flicked away in the depths, hurt a bit, but not badly.

VINCE straightened up. "Bad luck. You shoulda—"

The back of the beefy hand caught him flush on the cheek. He pinwheeled back, falling heavily, the gaff turning end for end, falling into the sea. Vince's head hit the rail and he lay stunned for a moment, and then picked himself up slowly, ashamed of the tears of pain and anger that stung his eyes.

Dave bellied toward him, indignantly. *"I* shoulda! *I* shoulda! Don't you know how the hell to bring a fish aboard? I ought to smack you another one."

"Let out your line," Jerry said, "Maybe there's some more around here."

Dave went back toward the stern. Vince moved his tongue around inside his cheek. His teeth had cut the inside of his cheek. He spat over the side. His face throbbed.

The men fished intently for a few minutes and then relaxed. Dave said, in his high voice, "That's the

second mistake, wouldn't you say, Jerry?"

"Yes, that was a real mistake. Too bad."

"Certainly is. Cap'n Vince, you know what that first mistake cost you? It cost you exactly ten bucks." Vince didn't answer.

Jerry said, "And you just cost yourself another ten bucks. It looks like you don't make much profit out of this trip."

Vince said thinly, "You promised."

"Who the hell promised what? You heard me, boy. I said we might give you a little present. We changed our minds. Let's find us another school of those macks. How about another beer, boy, before it gets too warm to drink?"

Helpless, Vince groaned silently; he wished he still had the gaff. He wanted to bang them on the head with it. He opened two cans of beer and took them back. Jerry gave him a quick hard look.

"No hard feelings, eh, boy?"

Vince didn't answer. Jerry said, "You better say it, or maybe Dave will slap you around a little. Dave, he don't like soreheads."

"No hard feelings," Vince said, his voice barely audible, feeling humiliated and ashamed of himself.

He found some more mackerel for them. The day seemed to be lasting a hundred years. He wished he could get them both standing up close to the stern rail. Jam the throttle forward and they'd both go over. He looked at their broad shoulders. Pink was turning inevitably to red. Apparently they were too tight to feel the pain. The sun was sucking the natural oils out of their skin, burning deep into the under layers. There was one satisfaction: They both stood a good chance of spending a pretty uncomfortable night.

It took his idea quite a while to develop. He considered it from all sides, and found it good. He cheered up at once, and began calling them "Sir," and brought another beer, the last two cans, without being asked.

He went astern with a rag, and opened the bait well and dipped it in the salt water and carefully rubbed it on his arms and forehead, saying, "Sun sure is hot."

Jerry stared at him. "What you doing that for, boy?"

"Well, it's kind of a trick. It's how come we tan good down here and don't burn much. Not many people know it."

"Salt water?"

"Sure. It takes all the burn out. You tan quick. I never use anything else. Before I found out about it, I used to be red as a cherry all summer."

"You sure got a nice tan now, kid."

No use urging them. He turned away. Jerry said, "Hey, toss me that rag, boy. I'm getting sore as hell."

"It'll fix you up," Vince said. "You got to do it about every ten minutes or so when the sun's hot like this. It dries off so fast."

Jerry doused himself liberally. He gave the rag to Dave. Dave did the same, and then they helped each other, doing each other's thick shoulders and back.

"It does feel good," Jerry said. "Glad to know about it, kid. We'll go back with a tan that'll knock 'em down, hey, Dave?"

At three o'clock Vince was half-starved. The men had drunk too much beer to feel hungry. Vince had eaten a half a box of soggy crackers, and he was still hungry. But every time he looked out at the two men, he forgot his hunger. They had used the rag a half dozen times. In Vince's mixed emotions, the strongest feeling was awe. The astringency of the salt had removed the rest of the protective oils and they both were a purplish-red The bait well was nearly full of fish.

Jerry hunched his big shoulders and turned to Vince. "Kid, it's getting chilly out here. Let's knock it off and get on in. You ready, Dave?"

"I've *been* ready."

"Okay," Vince said. "Reel in."

The men reeled in. They put on their bright shirts gingerly. It was furnace-hot out on the airless Gulf. Dave's teeth began to chatter uncontrollably. He said, "Goddamn it, I don't feel so good."

"Neither do I. Kid, pour on the coal. This all this tub'll do?"

"She's wide open, mister."

They got progressively worse as Vince headed in at three-quarter throttle. It took a half hour to get to the inlet. Jerry was sick over the stern. Both men were shivering violently. Vince tied up the *Croaker* and they climbed hastily out. He handed up their rods and equipment.

Vince said softly, "You know, you could have got too much sun."

"Come on. Hurry up with that stuff."

"How about these fish, mister?"

"Put them in the back end of the car, kid."

Vince stood and scratched his chin with his thumb. "I got to figure this out. Haven't got any stringer. Might be able to go borrow one down the road and repay it later. Take about fifteen minutes."

Dave bent over violently and was sick again. He said, gagging, "Hell with the fish, Jerry! Come on. Got to get to a doctor. Hurry!"

They went for their car, quickly. The motor roared and the back wheels spun as they turned up onto the highway and rumbled across the bridge.

Vince went into the cabin and got his fish knife. He heaved the fish up onto the dock, knelt beside them and fileted them quickly and deftly. He gave old Simmons a dozen nice mackerel filets and took the rest home with him in a bucket.

Tuesday, after the high-school bus dropped him off, Vince took the paint and brushes and went down to the inlet. He was working when he saw the official car pull off the road and park. Ricky Harliss, from the sheriff's office, sauntered over to the dock and sat on his heels and lit a cigarette. "Getting her shaped up, Vince?"

"She's coming along, Ricky."

"What do you figure on doing with her?"

"I guess I'll fish commercial this summer. Buddy Keever wants in with me. He's got a good net."

"Thought maybe you were figuring on charter boating, Vince."

Vince applied a long even brush stroke and then glanced up, meeting the shrewd eyes. "No, I wouldn't figure on that."

"Thought maybe you practiced a little charter boating, day afore yesterday. Sunday, that is."

Vince laid down another brush stroke. "Sunday? No, Sunday I took out a couple of friends of mine, from Michigan. Name of Jerry and Dave."

"Any luck?"

"A lot of macks and some trash and lost a big stray king off the gaff."

"How much those fellows pay you, Vince?"

Vince laid the brush on top of the can and straightened up. He looked steadily and gravely at Ricky. "Ricky, they didn't give me a dime. I told you they was friends."

Ricky straightened and snapped his cigarette into the water. He sighed. "Okay. I know you and I knew your daddy a long time. Never know of either of you lying. It's a good thing you didn't take any money, Vince."

"Why?" Vince inquired blandly. "Something wrong?"

"You better take flowers to those friends of yours, Vince. They're down in the hospital, all gauzed up like mummies, getting shot full of plasma, out of their heads off and on."

"They'll be all right?"

"The doc says so. Says it was close, but they'll be okay."

"That's good," Vince said. He spat at the soaked cigarette receding on the tide. "If I get around to it, I might send a couple of mackerel over one of these days."

Vince watched Ricky drive off. Then he squatted again, dipped the brush, and began to stroke the paint on—slowly, evenly, lovingly. •



Bluebook's COMPLETE Book-Length Novel By BRETT HALLIDAY

The night was hot, humid, and still in Miami. Clad only in pajama bottoms, Michael Shayne lay spread-eagled on the double bed. For hours he tossed restlessly, and, at last, fell into a fitful sleep.

A slight sound awakened him. He opened his eyes and lay motionless, listening. The dim light of a waning moon showed through the open windows. He was about to close his eyes again when he saw a rectangle of yellowish light coming through the bedroom doorway.

A sluffing, slithering sound reached his ears. Wide awake, now, and alert, he swung his long legs over the edge of the bed and stood up. Two steps brought him to the open doorway where he saw that the living-room door was ajar and the strange light emanated from the bulb in the hotel corridor.

Shayne could see a bent figure, fumbling with something on the floor. Then, hands caught at the hem of a garment, raised it, and when the garment was removed, the slender, curvaceous form of a nude woman stood before him. Then she glided noiselessly to the living-room door.

Briefly, her body gleamed like ivory in the yellowish glow, then she eased the door shut. There was a slight click. She pulled the knob to make certain the latch had caught, then turned toward the bedroom, with only the moonlight at the open windows to guide her.

Shayne took a quick step backward and frowned. The woman moved past the bedroom door and on to the bathroom. She went in, closed the door, and snapped on the light.

Shayne stepped forward again. He stared for a moment at the rim of light under the bathroom door. A muscle twitched in his angular jaw, and he rubbed it meditatively. In all the years he had practiced, this was the most fantastic thing that had ever happened to him. A grin spread his wide mouth.

He crept back to bed, stretched out, and waited for the woman's next move. He looked at the luminous dial of the electric clock on the bedside table. The time was 2:20. He tried to figure how and why she had gained entrance to his apartment.

This woman seemed to know her way about, he mused. She had ignored his open bedroom door and gone straight to the bathroom. She acted, in fact, exactly like a wife who did not want to awaken her husband.

Shayne told himself he would be less than human if he were not intrigued by the situation. He heard the bathroom door open and the light-switch go off, then the slow tread of bare feet coming toward him. Through half-closed eyes he watched her go around the bed. With difficulty, he kept his breathing deep and regular.

She smoothed the pillow on her side, then eased herself onto the far edge of the mattress. For a while she lay motionless, flat on her back, her arms circled above her head.

Shayne reached out a long arm, clamped a palm on her bare arm and said, "Hi."

Her muscles contracted convulsively under his grip. Raising herself on one elbow, she cried out in surprise and fright, "You're awake!"

"How long did you expect me to keep on sleeping under these circumstances?" Shayne said in an amused voice.

She screamed, twisted away from him, leaped from the bed and shouted in alarm:

"You're—you're not—Ralph!"

"No," he agreed. "I'm not Ralph."

"Then who are you? What are you doing here?" she gasped.

"Why shouldn't I be here in my own bed?" Shayne demanded reasonably. "This has been my apartment

It began with the naked frame of an unknown woman. Then Michael Shayne found himself the victim of as naked a frame-up as any private detective ever faced: someone had murdered Ralph Carrol—someone named Michael Shayne, Detective.



and my bedroom for more years than I like to remember. And I'm turning on the light," he warned. "Let's see who you are and what this is all about."

The woman sprang through the doorway as the light came on. Shayne glimpsed a heart-shaped face framed in brown hair, and a slender, youthful body.

"Please, please stay in there until I can get some clothes on!" she begged. "There has been a terrible mistake—I thought you were my husband. *Please* stay there!"

"I'm sorry I'm not your husband," Shayne answered.

He had another fleeting glimpse of her as she scampered past the door hugging an armful of clothes. She paused beyond his vision and said angrily, "I'll get dressed in the bathroom—and then I want an explanation. I don't understand any of this, but I intend to get to the bottom of it."

"I could do with an explanation myself," Shayne growled. He glanced at the clock again. The time was 2:26. He was amazed that only six minutes had elapsed since he last noted the time. He retrieved his pajama top from the floor where he had tossed it earlier and pulled it over his tousled red head.

He padded into the living-room and turned on the ceiling light. Beside the overstuffed chair where the vision had been a short time ago, was a black suède slipper and a gossamer bit of blue nylon lying on the floor. He picked them up, strode to the bathroom door and knocked.

"Don't you dare come in here!" she screamed.

"I wouldn't intrude for the world," he cut in amiably. "You overlooked a few things. Open the door a crack and I'll hand them to you."

After a hesitant silence she opened the door a trifle. Her hand groped through the aperture and he put the apparel in it. She drew it in hastily, and slammed the door. Shayne strode to the corridor door, opened it, and examined the lock carefully. There was nothing to indicate that it had been tampered with. He clicked it shut and went into the kitchenette where he switched on the light and tried the door leading to the fire-escape. It was securely locked and the key hung on the nail where he always kept it.

Shayne's mouth was grimly set and his eyes puzzled. His thoughts flashed back to several occasions when his apartment had been opened by police, or by Chief Gentry himself. A few times both the front and back locks had been forced by criminals who left plenty of evidence. He swore under his breath, and muttered, "And now, b'gad, a dame opens my door with a key, strips herself and crawls into my bed!"

Shaking his red head savagely, he went to the refrigerator, took out a tray of cubes and carried it to the sink.

"I just don't know what to say," said a girlish voice from the open archway behind him. "I'm completely confused. I've never seen you before in my life, but I *know* this is the right apartment."

Shayne turned slowly and studied her for a moment. He said, "I've never seen you before, either, baby, but you look good—even with clothes on."

"How dare you!" she exploded.

"Now, stand where you are," said Shayne, "and let's have a better look in the light."

She wore a tailored suit of some light material, beige or suntan in color, that fitted her trim figure well, with a vivid yellow scarf fluffed under her chin. She flushed under his gaze. "Well, what have you to say for yourself?"

"Just this—my apartment is Number 116. I live here, and I don't know your Ralph. Have a drink?"

"I—I could use one," she stammered.

Shayne filled two glasses with water. He swung around with them in his hands. "Sit down and make yourself comfortable," he invited. "Maybe we can make some sense out of this if we work at it over a drink."

She crossed to a chair near the desk and sat down. "I haven't got over my fright yet. I—you—well, you can't expect me to be calm after finding myself in bed with a perfect stranger, when I thought you—were my husband."

Shayne gave her a crooked smile. "It must have been quite disconcerting." He began pouring cognac into a glass.

"Suppose we drink to your husband. Then," he went on firmly, "you can start at the beginning and tell me how you came to mistake my apartment for his."

She took a drink, sputtered and coughed, reached quickly for the ice water and gulped a mouthful. "I don't know," she murmured, "just where to start, because I still don't understand. I was definitely told Apartment 116. And the key fitted. Everything here is just the way I expected it to be—the kitchen door there, the bathroom, and bedroom." She looked around with wide, wondering eyes.

"Someone told you that your husband would be asleep here tonight?"

Illustrated by AL TARTER

said Shayne patiently. "Someone gave you a key to my apartment so you could slip in? Was your husband supposed to be expecting you?"

"Oh, no," she said hastily. "He didn't know. That was the whole thing, don't you see?" She took a small sip of cognac and set the glass on the desk. "That's why I didn't dare turn on a light for fear of wakening him. I knew that if I could just get in bed with him before he knew I was there, he'd have to—to—" She paused, her face crimson. "Can't you see I had to do it?" she burst out. "Because I *know* he still loves me. It's just his crazy pride, and I had to have a chance to break it down and show him that nothing is really different—that he's still my husband and I'm still his wife. You do understand, don't you?" she ended, leaning tensely toward him.

"Hell, no," said Shayne curtly. He took a sizable drink of cognac, leaned back in his swivel chair and lit a cigarette. "Now, start at the beginning and take it slow. First, what's your name?"

"Nora Carrol—Mrs. Ralph Carrol." She glanced down at a plain platinum wedding band and a diamond solitaire. "We live in Wilmington. That is, we did, until Ralph came to Miami a few weeks ago to establish residence for a divorce." Her shoulders sagged, and she became silent.

"Then what?" said Shayne sharply.

"I suppose I have to tell you all of it. You'll never believe me unless I do. Well, we've been married less than a year. We were terribly happy.

"Then he started getting anonymous letters accusing me of the most dreadful things. He didn't believe them, of course, but when they kept coming he began wondering. He started spying on me. That made me angry, so I did a dreadfully foolish thing. I began flirting to get back at him. And then there was a week-end party and I drank too much." She jerked herself erect and added in a stricken voice, "I made a damned fool of myself." She covered her face with her hands.

Shayne took a long drink, lit another cigarette and waited patiently.

Nora Carrol dropped her hands in her lap and went on: "I don't blame Ralph for being angry, but he left home before I could explain or ask his forgiveness. I felt awful. He wouldn't answer my letters. He wouldn't talk to me when I called him long distance. So I came to Miami. He wouldn't let me go to his room, and when I tried to talk to him in the lobby he cut me dead. Then he checked out of the hotel, that very night, and nobody knew where he went."

Shayne said, "*H-m-m.* When was all this?"

"About two weeks ago." Nora Carrol took a sip of cognac. "I went back to Wilmington and talked to our lawyer there. He was very understanding, but he said there wasn't a thing in the world I could do if Ralph was determined to get a divorce.

"You see, he had plenty of evidence from that horrible week-end." She stopped talking suddenly. Her brown eyes misted with tears.

MICHAEL SHAYNE sipped cognac, smoked and waited.

"But my lawyer told me there was one chance," she continued. "A slim one, but I love Ralph so much I was ready to grab at anything. So, when he outlined the plan, I didn't hesitate for a moment."

"What sort of plan?" Shayne demanded.

"Well, he said that if I could persuade Ralph to come back to me for just one night it would be enough to nullify what I had done—do away with Ralph's grounds for divorce—everything. It seems that if a husband takes his wife back after—well, after she's made a mistake like I did, then the law says it doesn't count and can't be used against her as evidence later."

Michael Shayne emptied his brandy glass. He nodded slowly, avoiding her eyes. "So that's what you planned to do. Slip into your husband's bed and use your sex appeal to win him back, at least for one night. After that, no matter how much he wanted to be rid of you, he wouldn't have further legal grounds for a divorce action."

"You make it sound indecent," she flared angrily. "But I love Ralph, and I know he loves me."

"So we come to tonight," the redhead said casually. "Fill me in on that."

"I can't," she said brokenly. "I can't explain it at all. All I did was follow Mr. Bates' instructions to the letter."

Shayne's eyes were very bright. "Who is Bates?"

"He's our lawyer in Wilmington. . . . I just told you."

"Go on, Mrs. Carrol."

"Well, Mr. Bates suggested that we might get a detective in Miami to find Ralph, and then I could try once more for a reconciliation. It all seemed so simple and logical when we planned it in Wilmington," she went on in a faltering tone, "to have the detective get a key to Ralph's room, and all I had to do was unlock the door and slip in sometime after midnight. I just *knew* it would work."

Her face crimsoned under the big detective's steady gaze and his slow smile.

"Sure, it would have worked with your husband," Shayne agreed. "You would have had him right back if you'd crept into his bed instead of mine. The question is, how the devil did you make such a mistake?"

"I don't know," she cried wildly, straining forward with her hands clenched. "Do you think I would have subjected myself to this—this inquisition, if I had known? I flew down from Wilmington yesterday and checked in at the Commodore. Everything was arranged. There was a message for me from the detective, enclosing a key to Ralph's room and a sketch of the apartment so I could get around in the dark without waking him too soon. I was to wait in my room until the detective phoned that Ralph was in for the night. He called about one o'clock. I waited a while, until I felt sure Ralph would be asleep. Then I taxied over here and slipped upstairs. And that's all." She made a gesture of finality with her hands and reached for her cognac glass.

Shayne tugged at his earlobe, his gray eyes somber, considering her story. Her words and her tone had the ring of sincerity, but it was impossible for him to understand how anyone could have mistaken his apartment for the one occupied by her husband.

HE reached forward and picked up the telephone. An unfamiliar voice said, "Yes, sir?"

He frowned at the instrument and asked, "Is this Dick?"

"No, sir. Dick is sick and I'm substituting for him. Can I help you?"

Shayne hesitated, then asked, "Do you have a Ralph Carrol registered here?"

"One moment, please."

Nora Carrol slid to the edge of her chair. Tensing forward, she pleaded, "Please, *please* don't tell him."

He covered the mouthpiece with his fingers. "Hold it," he whispered. "Let me find out if your husband is in this hotel." He waited a moment and was told, "Mr. Ralph Carrol is in Number 216. Shall I ring him, sir?"

Shayne hesitated, then said, "No, thanks. Skip it for now." He cradled the receiver and said, "Your husband is in *Two*-sixteen, one floor directly above. Could you have mistaken the number?"

"No. That is, I don't see how I could have. The key opened your door. The same key wouldn't fit both of them, would it?"

"If it does," Shayne growled, "the management is going to get hell in the morning! Let's see that key." He held out a broad palm and waited while she picked up a black suède purse. After a period of digging and fumbling she produced a flat brass key and handed it to him.

Shayne observed its shiny newness, turned it over and found that it had no room number stamped on it. Otherwise, it appeared to be a duplicate of the familiar one he had carried on his key-ring for many years. He shrugged, tossed it onto the desk and asked, "Do you want to go up one flight and try it on your husband's door? He should be sound asleep now and you should be able to seduce him without too much trouble."

Nora Carrol came to her feet and said angrily, "You make my wanting Ralph back sound cold-blooded and bitchy."

"Maybe," replied Shayne moodily, "I'm sore at being wakened so enticingly—and futilely. Call me tomorrow and let me know how you make out. If the keys are duplicates I want to know about it."

A knock sounded on the door, hard and insistent.

Shayne was on his feet. "Get into the bedroom and keep out of sight." He picked up her cognac glass and the one for ice water as he spoke and shoved them into her hands. Nora sprinted into the bedroom and closed the door.

A louder knock came, accompanied by a gruff voice that ordered, "Open up!"

Shayne glanced over his shoulder to make certain the bedroom door was closed, then opened the hall door. He scowled at the florid-faced bulky man who stood on the threshold.

"Thought I recognized your voice, Will," he said casually. "Come in and tell me what the hell keeps you awake at this hour of the morning."

Chapter Two

POLICE CHIEF WILL GENTRY had been both friend and antagonist for many years and a frequent visitor to the detective's second-floor suite. He entered the room stolidly and glanced with interest at the glass of ice water and empty cognac glass on the desk.

"You're up, too," he pointed out mildly. "Bad conscience keep you awake?"

Shayne closed the door and followed him to the center of the room while Gentry settled himself in the chair Nora Carrol had just vacated. "Too hot to sleep," the redhead replied. "My conscience is as pure as a lily right now." He seated himself, picked up the cognac bottle and said, "Drink?" as he refilled his own glass.

Will Gentry shook his graying head and took a thin black cigar from his breast pocket. "Too hot for drinking, too," rumbled Gentry. He bit off the end of the cigar and lit it, then

asked, "What do you know about Ralph Carrol?"

Shayne arched ragged red brows and asked, "Who was that again?"

"Carrol. Ralph Carrol."

"Oh—Carrol! What's your interest?"

Gentry's slightly protuberant eyes met Shayne's in a level gaze. "How well do you know Carrol, Mike?"

"I don't," said Shayne promptly.

"Don't waste time lying to me. When did you see him last?"

"I never saw him in my life, Will—not to my knowledge."

"Why did you call down to the desk a few minutes ago to ask if he was registered here?" the chief probed.

"How the devil do you know that?" Shayne blurted out. "It wasn't more than five minutes ago."

"That's why I'm particularly interested," Gentry told him patiently.

"There could be a thousand reasons," said Shayne lightly. "Maybe I had a date with his wife and wanted to be certain the guy was in bed and would stay put while I kept it. Maybe—"

"Cut it, Mike. I just want one reason—the real one."

Shayne sobered and said quietly, "I'm not sure I can give you the real reason without betraying a confidence. I certainly can't, without knowing your reason for asking."

"If it's any news to you," Gentry rumbled, "Ralph Carrol is dead. You know better than to hold out on a murder investigation."

Shayne's eyes were hooded, his face expressionless; but he was thinking fast. In a sense, the chief's statement came as no great surprise. From the moment Gentry asked his first question about Carrol, Shayne had realized that it must be something like this that placed the chief of police in the hotel at the same time Shayne made his query to the desk. The substitute clerk had relayed the information to the police, of course. A bad break for the detective, and one which would not have occurred if Dick had been on the switchboard.

"In that case," he said, after a short silence, "I think you'd better get your answers from the source, Will." He took a long drink of cognac, got up and strode across to the bedroom door and opened it.

NORA CARROL jumped up from the edge of the bed, a question forming on her lips. Shayne took her forearm in a hard grip that forestalled her words. He led her into the living-room and said to Gentry: "This is Mrs. Ralph Carrol." And to the girl he explained gently, "Will Gentry is our police chief. He tells me your husband has been murdered."

She stiffened, then swayed against him. "Murdered?" she gasped.

Shayne put his arm around her waist and half-carried her to a chair opposite Gentry, then held his brandy glass to her lips. "Drink this," he ordered. "All of it."

She obeyed.

"Get hold of yourself," said Shayne swiftly, then. "Sit right where you are and repeat your story to Chief Gentry. And tell all of the truth this time. If you lied to me in one single instance before, now is the time to change it."

"I didn't lie," she protested, suddenly shaken from her shock and grief by his accusation. "Why should I?"

"I don't know," he growled. "But I'll get some clothes on and I'll leave the bedroom door open while you're talking. You might just happen to remember something important.

"She's all yours, Will," he went on to Gentry. "When you're through with her you'll know as much about this as I do."

HE turned away to the bedroom, scowling heavily, and listened to Nora Carrol giving Gentry approximately the same story she had told him. Her voice broke several times when she mentioned her husband's name.

Shayne finished dressing and strolled into the living-room buttoning the sleeves of a fresh white shirt as she completed her recital. He grinned briefly at the expression of open disbelief on Gentry's broad, florid face.

Circling the pair, he sat down in the swivel chair and refilled his cognac glass, rocked back, and listened with interest as Gentry asked the same question he himself had asked upon learning that Ralph Carrol was occupying the suite directly above.

"Could you have mistaken the number, Mrs. Carrol? Are you sure you were told to come to *One*-sixteen instead of *Two*-sixteen?"

"I'm positive. It was written out in the instructions that were waiting for me at the hotel when I arrived yesterday, and the number was distinctly repeated over the telephone tonight."

Gentry picked up the shiny new key and studied it. "All these Yale keys look alike to me," he rumbled. "But we'll have to leave the test to an expert, Mike. The first men who arrived here after getting the report on Carrol couldn't get a duplicate key from the new man on the desk. He couldn't find a master key, either. So they forced the lock and now it's jammed. It would be impossible to make the test right now."

Shayne thought for a moment, then said, "Look, Will, let's do this—call upstairs and have the key to Number 216 brought down. If it doesn't unlock my door, then we'll know that this key couldn't possibly unlock his."

"Good enough." Gentry reached for the phone, and Shayne went into the kitchenette to replenish his glass of ice water. When he returned, he said, "I think it's our turn to have a little dope from you, Will. When was Carrol murdered?"

The chief removed the soggy cigar from his mouth and aimed it at the wastebasket. "There was a telephone call about 2:25. A man called, said there was a dead man in Room 216 at this hotel, and hung up. A patrol car got the flash and was here a few minutes later.

"They wasted a few minutes trying to get a key, as I told you, then broke in. The lights were out and everything in the room was in perfect order. Carrol's body was naked, and he evidently died without a struggle. He had been stabbed with a sharp silver paper-knife." He paused, his agate eyes regarding the woman solemnly. "Did your husband own a silver paper-knife, Mrs. Carrol?"

"Y-yes." Her composure wilted at the question and she began to sob again. "But how do you know it's Ralph who's dead? There *must* be some mistake—"

"The body was identified as Carrol's by the elevator operator and the bellboy," Gentry told her in a gentler tone. "I want you to make a positive identification, of course." He arose heavily as a knock sounded on the door. "That'll be the key for Carrol's suite."

He went to the door, followed by Shayne, opened it and took a key from the young patrolman who stood there. Chief Gentry tried it in the lock. The key slid in about halfway and refused to go farther. Stepping aside, he asked, "You want to try it?"

SHAYNE removed the key and examined it carefully. It was old and tarnished, and plainly stamped with the numerals 216. He tried it in the lock, and, as before, it stuck halfway. Shaking his red head, he admitted sourly, "No soap," and handed the key to the waiting patrolman.

Gentry dismissed the young officer. "All right, Hagen. Take it back, and tell Sergeant Hale to stay there until I come up."

He closed the door, and returning to their seats he said, "That knocks the accidental theory in the head, Mike. If we can believe Mrs. Carrol, she was deliberately sent to this hotel and to your apartment tonight, with a key that opened your door, just about the same time her husband was being stabbed to death on the next floor. What I want to know now is why." He sat down heavily and plucked a fresh cigar from his pocket.

"That is the question I want answered," said Shayne grimly. "And I

think we'd better ask the guy who sent her here. . . . Who is he?" he demanded abruptly of Nora Carrol.

She jerked her head up, blinking tears from her eyes. "What? Who—is whom?" she faltered.

"The detective who located your husband in this hotel and told you he was in 116? Who furnished you with a key to my place and telephoned you a little after one o'clock to say the coast was clear? What's his name, and where can we locate him?"

Nora Carrol turned slowly from Shayne's demanding gaze to Gentry's set and uncompromising mouth.

"I think he's quite well known in Miami," she said. "His name is Shayne. Michael Shayne."

Chapter Three

INCREDULOUS SILENCE FOLLOWED. Unaware of the bombshell she had exploded, Nora lowered her head again to dab at her eyes with the damp handkerchief.

Recovering his speech first, Shayne began hotly, "Now, by God—"

"Hold it, fella," the chief interrupted in an angry bellow. "I don't want a word from you. Drink your cognac and keep your mouth shut while I ask Mrs. Carrol a few questions. If you say one word—and I mean it—*one word,* before I'm finished, I'll have you taken in and locked up until I get at the bottom of this."

Shayne nodded morosely. He took a long drink, lit a cigarette and said quietly, "Go to it, Will. I'm just as curious as you are."

Gentry shifted an unlit cigar across his mouth, bent forward and planted a hand on each broad thigh. "Describe Shayne for me, Mrs. Carrol."

"I haven't met him personally. There was a letter from him, enclosing the key, waiting for me when I checked in yesterday. Then two telephone calls, one in the afternoon to check my arrival and confirm everything, and the other one at one o'clock."

"I see," mused Gentry. "And what sort of voice did Mr. Shayne have?"

"Why," she hesitated, then continued thoughtfully, "a rather nice voice, I thought. He was very businesslike and pleasant."

"Would you recognize the voice again?"

"I don't know. Possibly, but I really couldn't say for certain."

"Did he leave a number where you could reach him?" he asked.

"No, he didn't. I asked him for it the first time he called, but he said it wouldn't be necessary, and besides he would be moving around and couldn't say where he'd be."

"This letter from him with the key and instructions. Was it on a printed letterhead? Do you recall the address?"

She frowned again, biting her underlip, then faltered, "I think so. I'm not positive, but I seem to recall a printed letterhead. It was typewritten and signed with his name," she ended brightly.

"Do you have it with you?"

"No."

"I'll want to see that letter, Mrs. Carrol. When you leave here I'll send a man with you to your hotel to pick it up."

Nora Carrol looked suddenly uncomfortable and a little frightened. "But I tore it up. I didn't know it was important, and he had asked me to destroy it. I thought it was a rather silly precaution, but I did."

"I see." Gentry's tone was a gentle purr. "That's very interesting! Did he say why he wanted the letter destroyed?"

"Oh, something about his taking a big chance and that it was illegal for him to get me a key like that, and if anything went wrong he might lose his license."

"But you did have letters from him while you were still in Wilmington?" the chief probed.

"No. But Mr. Bates did. Mr. Bates—he is my lawyer."

"How did you first contact this Michael Shayne, Mrs. Carrol?"

"I didn't. Mr. Bates did. I don't know exactly how he managed it. When we talked about hiring a private detective here in Miami, he mentioned Mr. Shayne's name, and said that he would get in touch with him."

"And this was two weeks ago?"

"Around then."

Gentry grunted and settled back in his chair. He turned to Shayne and said, "So there you have it, Mike. What's your explanation?"

"I think," said the detective grimly, "you should introduce Mrs. Carrol to me. We neglected that little nicety when we met so informally about an hour ago."

"Then she'll probably be quite interested," Gentry growled. "This is Michael Shayne, Mrs. Carrol. One of the best-known private detectives in Miami, possibly in the whole country."

Nora Carrol drew in a long, audible breath, and stared at Shayne as though he had suddenly sprouted an extra head.

FOR a moment she was speechless. "*You're* Michael Shayne?"

"That's right."

She stiffened and half-rose from her chair. "You sent me your own key!" she raged. "You tricked me into coming here to your room!"

"I didn't send you my key," Shayne returned savagely. "And I didn't trick you into coming to my room." He jerked his head around to face Gentry. "You know me better than that, Will." He stood up impatiently, his shoulders hunched and his angular jaw jutting. "Somebody has lied about this whole thing," he stated flatly. "But I give you my word of honor, Will, I never heard the name Ralph Carrol until approximately two-thirty this morning when this dame slipped into my apartment, took off her clothes and crawled into bed with me. If that doesn't satisfy you, you'd better lock me up."

Will Gentry made a slight gesture and said, "That's good enough for me, Mike." He turned to the girl and said, "Now, Mrs. Carrol, don't you think you'd better start telling the whole truth?"

"I have," she vowed. "Every word is the truth. If this man is really Michael Shayne and he didn't send me the key and telephone me to come here last night, who did?"

"YOU still insist this man told you his name was Michael Shayne?" Gentry asked.

"Definitely."

The chief's deep sigh was expelled with a sound between a grunt and a weary groan.

Shayne sat down, his face a mask of concentration. "You say that your only contact with this detective was through a lawyer in Wilmington. That is, until you arrived in Miami yesterday and took over."

"I've told you over and over that Mr. Bates handled everything," she said irritably.

"This Bates is your lawyer?"

"Well, he's actually Ralph's lawyer. But he took my side against Ralph in the divorce action."

Shayne considered for a brief period. "I think we should clear up the Wilmington end first, Will. Why don't you call Bates right now?" He moved the telephone closer to the chief. "He should be notified of Carrol's death, anyway."

Gentry placed a call to Wilmington, Delaware.

Only a few seconds elapsed before he said: "Mr. Bates? Chief Gentry, calling from Miami. A man who is registered in a hotel here as Ralph Carrol of Wilmington has been murdered. I understand he was a client of yours." He waited placidly while an excited voice crackled into the receiver and mingled with Nora Carrol's audible sobs.

"No, we haven't any real clue yet. But there are a couple of questions you can answer. Is it a fact that you advised and aided Mrs. Carrol in coming to Miami yesterday to at-

tempt a reconciliation with her husband?"

He nodded his head while listening to the lawyer's reply, then said, "I see. Yes. . . . It appears now that her husband was killed before she was able to see him. The important thing I need from you right now, Mr. Bates, is the name of the private detective in Miami who located Mr. Carrol for you and made the arrangement for his wife to enter his suite in the middle of the night."

Again he listened, then sent a sardonic glance at Shayne as he said, "Shayne, eh? Michael Shayne. Yes. I do know him personally."

The redhead came to his feet, reached for the phone and demanded angrily, "Let me talk to him, Will. I'll cram that lie down his throat!" He snatched the instrument.

"Michael Shayne speaking," he rasped. "You'd better hightail it down here fast. And bring all the evidence in your possession purporting to back up your story that I had anything to do with this."

"I will certainly do that, Mr. Shayne." The lawyer's voice was precise and icy.

Shayne snorted with disgust and handed the phone to Will Gentry who said curtly, "Gentry speaking." He listened for a time. Then he said, "That's exactly what we want you to do, Bates. If you're not in my office by one o'clock tomorrow—*today*, that is—I'll have a warrant served on you in Wilmington."

He slammed the receiver down and fixed his agate gaze on Shayne. "God help me if you've put me out on a limb this time, Mike! Mr. Bates is flying down in the morning with documentary evidence and all the necessary legal writs to put us both in Raiford for life." He started to put the unlit, sodden cigar between his lips, but instead flung it into the wastebasket.

Shayne managed a crooked grin. "That's just fine, Will. There's nothing I'd rather see right now than this Bates' documentary evidence."

Will Gentry put his big hands on his chair arms and pushed his bulky body up from the deep chair. "I guess we've done about all we can here. There's still the formal identification of your husband's body. If you'll come upstairs with me, Mrs. Carrol, we can get it over with."

Nora sprang to her feet. "Then you think it might not be Ralph?" she asked excitedly.

Gentry shrugged. "That remains to be seen."

He took her arm in his pudgy palm and propelled her toward the door saying. "Stick around, Mike. I want to talk to you."

"Want me to come along?"

"No. I'll be back in five minutes."

The telephone rang as Gentry and Nora Carrol reached the door. Gentry stopped, turned and listened while Shayne answered it. When a man's high-pitched and excited voice came over the wire, the redhead pressed the receiver tight against his ear, hoping to keep the sound from Gentry's range of hearing.

The man was saying, "Shayne? Am I glad to reach you! You've heard about Carrol, huh?"

Shayne arched his ragged brows at Gentry, groaned, and said into the mouthpiece, "For chrissake, honey, why don't you go to bed and sleep it off. Do you know what time it is?"

Will Gentry hesitated briefly, then opened the door and went out with Nora, leaving it ajar. With one ear Shayne listened for the chief's solid footsteps in the corridor, and with the other heard his caller's plaintive words.

The man said, "What's the matter? Did I wake you up? This here is Ludlow talking. Don't you know about Carrol?"

"What about him?" Shayne demanded cautiously as the footsteps outside died away.

"He's dead. He was dead when I got there, Shayne. Look, I don't know what this is all about or how much I'm on the spot, but I can't afford any trouble. I didn't give my name when I reported to the cops. I know your reputation and I know you'll give it to me straight. Can you keep me out of it, or should I quick call in again to Headquarters and say I was scared the first time and didn't know what I was doing, and then give them all the dope?"

Shayne was thinking fast. "Who did you say this is?" he asked in a low voice.

"Ludlow. You know—" There was a gasp, then a pause. "This ain't Shayne!" he yelped. A sharp click stung Shayne's eardrum.

Shayne cradled the receiver slowly, trying to remember someone named Ludlow, when the telephone rang again.

He picked up the receiver and heard the substitute operator on the lobby switchboard saying, "Here's Mr. Shayne now."

"I've been trying to get you," a husky voice began. "I've just heard the shocking news about Ralph Carrol, over the radio. Nora's name wasn't mentioned. Do you think she is involved?"

"Who's calling?" Shayne asked.

"You wouldn't know my name, but it's very important that I see you at once, Mr. Shayne. We've got to keep Nora out of it. I'll pay you ten thousand dollars to forget everything you know about tonight."

Shayne said, "Ten grand is a nice round sum. Who's offering it?"

"It doesn't matter, does it? I have the cash. All I need is your assurance that you won't tell the police about Nora."



Nora sprang to her feet. "Then you think it might not be Ralph?" she asked excitedly. Gentry shrugged. "That remains to be seen." Then, to Mike: "Stick around. I want to talk to you."

Shayne said, "I think we'd better talk this over. Where are you?"

"If you're on the level," the husky voice answered, "and willing to keep your mouth shut for ten thousand dollars, leave there as soon as you hang up and drive north on Biscayne Boulevard. It's 3:42 right now, by my watch. You should reach Seventy-ninth Street about four o'clock. Pull into the closed gasoline station on the southeast corner and wait there for me. If you're on the square and there are no cops, you'll get your money."

Shayne said, "I'll be tbere at four o'clock, in a black Hudson, and alone." He broke the connection, got up and went to the front door which Gentry had left open, listened for a second, and hearing no sound from above, closed the door quietly and hurried back to the telephone.

He gave Lucy Hamilton's number, and when her sleepy voice answered he said rapidly:

"Listen carefully, angel, and don't ask questions. Get dressed fast—a light-colored suit, if you have one. Wear a yellow scarf fluffed out at your throat. Bareheaded. Call a taxi while you're dressing. Go to the Commodore Hotel and ask at the desk for your key. You've forgotten your room number, having just checked in yesterday afternoon. You're Mrs. Ralph Carrol, or Nora Carrol, from Wilmington, Delaware. If they insist you took your key with you when you went out about one o'clock, say you lost it or something. But get a kev to Mrs. Ralph Carrol's room and get inside. Look for a letter to Mrs. Carrol from Michael Shayne giving a sketch of the layout of my apartment. It should be easy to find. Then get out in a hurry, and back to bed. I'll see you later on at the office. Got it?"

"I think so," Lucy told him. "Is anything wrong, Michael?"

"Plenty. You've got maybe ten minutes to get that letter and get out of there. Good luck."

Shayne grabbed his hat from a hook nearby, and went down the corridor to a wide stairway and an exit that did not take him through the hotel lobby.

Chapter Four

A LIGHT SUIT, Michael had said. Lucy Hamilton took a creamy beige pongee from the hanger and spread it on the bed. She donned panties, bra and a half-slip, then slipped into the suit. Stockings and pumps took another minute. She tied a yellow scarf around her neck, fluffed the ends out, ran a comb through her brown curls, took three one-dollar bills from her purse and tucked them into her coat pocket. She grabbed up a compact and raced from the apartment.

It had taken less than five minutes, she thought breathlessly as she descended the stairs. Another three to reach the Commodore, and she would have two minutes left of the ten Shayne had allotted her for the assignment.

A taxi swerved to the curb as Lucy emerged. She got in and said, "The Commodore Hotel. Please hurry."

The cab pulled away with a jerk that sent Lucy back against the seat. There was no time to ask herself any questions, but several years' service as secretary to the redheaded detective had taught Lucy something about the nuances in his voice. And his curt orders tonight left her in no doubt as to the urgency of this task.

Right now, Lucy concentrated on summoning enough poise to convince the night clerk of a strange hotel that she was a guest named Mrs. Carrol who had mislaid the key to her room and also foolishly forgotten the number of that room.

THE taxi drew up in front of the hotel entrance with brakes squealing. Lucy pressed a dollar bill in the driver's hand, and hurried into the empty lobby.

She used her nicest smile when she reached the desk, and tried to look wistful and worried and hopeful at the same time. "I seem to have mislaid my key. Did I by any chance leave it at the desk? I just can't remember."

He said, "What number, Madam?"

"That's just it." Lucy's blush was genuine, as was her tone of uncertainty. "You see, I just checked in yesterday from Wilmington. I was so sort of excited to actually *be* in Miami for the first time, that I just didn't think of anything else. The name is Mrs. Carrol," she added, as though she really expected him to recognize her.

The clerk consulted a card-file briefly, slid one partially out and asked, "Mrs. Ralph Carrol?"

"Of course," said Lucy.

"Room 360," he told her, then turned to the key and mail cubicles, reached into one and took out a key attached to an oval piece of leather. "There's an extra here, so you must have left yours in your room." He held the key out to her.

Lucy wanted to grab it and run to the elevator, but she smiled gratefully and said, "How thoughtless of me! But I was *so* excited."

On the third floor she found Room 360 around a corner, and her heart pounded madly as she knocked.

There was no response, and after waiting a few seconds, she inserted the key and turned it. The door opened quietly and she stepped inside the dark room, felt along the wall for a light-switch, found it—and as the room was flooded with light a blanket descended over her head.

Strong arms carried her across the room where she was dumped on the bed.

Her feet were free, and she kicked wildly, but a band of something was tightened around her waist, imprisoning her arms in the vast dark folds of the blanket. She was left like that, kicking and struggling.

She managed to pull one hand free, loosening the band so that the other hand slipped out easily. She twisted and tugged frantically, then felt herself rolling off the bed. She landed on the floor with a dull thud, staggered to her feet, and pulled the blanket upward inch by inch until her head was free.

She was alone. The light was still on and the door closed. The band that held her a prisoner in the blanket was a wide red patent-leather belt with a large silver buckle. She unbuckled it and tossed the blanket onto the bed.

Still trembling from shock and gasping for breath, she started toward a wide chest of drawers above which a mirror hung. Her knees were weak, and she moved slowly. A key turning in the door startled her. Before she could move the door opened and a woman was looking at her with wide, startled eyes. Behind the woman stood a young policeman.

LUCY HAMILTON summoned all the presence of mind and knowledge gained as Michael Shayne's secretary, and used one of his favorite tactics of leaping to the attack instead of waiting to be attacked.

"Who are you," she demanded, "and what are you doing in my room? Officer! Go after the man who just attacked me! Don't stand there gawking!"

Nora Carrol gasped. "What does she mean? This is *my* room! What is she doing here?"

The officer stepped forward and confronted Lucy. "What's this about a man attacking you?"

"Just what I said," she answered vehemently. "I came into my room, about three minutes ago, and when I turned on the light, a man leaped at me from behind the door and threw a blanket over my head. Then he threw me down and buckled that red belt around me and bound my arms. I had a terrible time freeing myself. You must have met him in the hallway."

The patrolman looked at Lucy's tousled hair, at the belt and the blanket. "We didn't see anybody," he said uncertainly, "but—"

"Don't listen to her, Officer. This is *my* room!" Nora Carrol's voice was

an outraged wail. "What's the matter with everybody in this city? Are they crazy?"

Lucy made a pretense of looking wonderingly around the room, noting the smart suitcase standing open on the stand at the foot of the bed, and articles strewn on the floor.

"There evidently is some mistake, Officer," she said in a tone of dismay. "These aren't my things." She looked down at the key to the room which had fallen to the floor in the struggle. "But the clerk gave me that key." She looked at Nora again as though really seeing her for the first time, and her face brightened. "Why, we're dressed almost exactly alike," she exclaimed. "The desk clerk must have mistaken me for you and gave me your key. Whoever attacked me probably made the same mistake." She took a couple of steps forward. "I'll just go down to the desk and get my own key."

The young officer blocked her way. "Wait a minute now. There's something funny here. Maybe it is like you say," he told Lucy. "But I'll go down to the desk with you to check." He closed the door. "You wait right here, miss." Then he added, to Nora Carrol, "And if you'll excuse me, I've got orders from the chief to take a look around before I leave."

"If you must, please hurry." Nora spoke wearily, took out a small handkerchief and pressed it to her eyes, then collapsed on the bed, her shoulders shaking with sobs.

Lucy edged nearer the door, the idea of escape in her mind, watching the officer while he made a superficial search of the room. She noticed that he paid no particular attention to the desk drawers or the wastebasket or the suitcase and its scattered contents, but he did keep an eye on her, even while he opened the bathroom door to glance briefly inside.

His search was superficial and Lucy's fingers itched to get into the drawers and the suitcase, for she felt intuitively that he had been ordered to look for the same letter Shayne had hoped she might find before the police arrived. It gave her a feeling of satisfaction when he didn't find anything.

He stopped beside the bed after finishing. "We'll be going along now," he said awkwardly to the sobbing widow. "Lock your door on the inside and you'll be safe enough." She nodded her head vigorously but didn't reply aloud.

He stepped over to Lucy, took her arm officially and led her out, saying, "I hope it was just a mistake like you said, miss, but when it's murder, a man in my position can't afford to take anything for granted."

Lucy caught her breath audibly. "Murder?"

"That lady's husband."

"How awful!" Lucy exclaimed instinctively. Her heart hammered as the elevator stopped and they got in.

It was murder, and Michael was somehow involved in it. If only he had told her something of what it was all about! But he hadn't and now it was up to her to play it by ear and make up the melody as she went along.

She was in a quandary as the elevator descended. Once she faced the clerk at the desk and he told his story there was no way in the world she could see to avoid arrest, but if she could remain unidentified, keep her connection with her employer unknown, for a time, at least, while she was locked up on some charge that had nothing at all to do with murder, then perhaps—

When the elevator reached the ground floor and they stepped out, she grasped the officer's sleeve, drew him aside and said plaintively, "All right, then. I'll tell you the truth. I tried to bluff you, but you were too smart to fall for it."

She ran her fingers through her hair and tried to pat it into place, thinking desperately. "It's my boyfriend's idea, really. He thought it up and we've been pulling the same stunt for months without ever getting caught before."

"Prowling hotel rooms, eh?"

Lucy nodded and hung her head guiltily.

"How did you work it?" the officer asked, his eyes bright and alert.

"Like tonight, you know, casing a joint until we spotted somebody that looked enough like one or the other of us, getting a key to the room—"

Once she had begun, Lucy Hamilton launched into a story of a life of crime and petty thievery, alternately getting tough, begging, cajoling and sniffing. She put the blame on her male accomplice who, she said, had taken to dope of late.

"I swear I'm through with this sort of thing from now on. I'll never do it again. I swear I won't, Officer," she ended, her fingers tightening on his arm, her eyes looking up into his imploringly. "Just let me off this time, huh?"

He shook his head, gulped, and looked away from her pleading eyes. "Sorry, miss," he said harshly. "You'll have to tell it to the judge." He caught her arm firmly. "Come on over to the desk and we'll talk to the clerk."

At the desk the clerk looked her over with interest and confirmed her story about the manner in which she had gained possession of the key to Room 360. Then she was led out to a police car. Her hope, now, was that Chief Gentry would be busy elsewhere for at least a couple of hours, and that she would not be brought into contact with any one on the police force who would recognize her as Michael Shayne's secretary.

Her hope was short-lived. A reporter from the *Herald* was lounging at the desk in desultory conversation with the night sergeant when she was brought in. He glanced at the pair without much interest; then his bleary eyes widened in recognition as he studied Lucy more closely. He was a short, fat man, partially bald, and as the young officer propelled Lucy nearer the desk he jumped up, exclaiming:

"What's up? You're Lucy Hamilton, aren't you—Mike Shayne's secretary?"

"Hell, no! Who's that?" She looked him in the eye and screwed her face up defiantly. "I ain't nobody's secretary."

The fat reporter whooped with laughter. "Okay, sister. But that's what the shamus insists on calling you. What gives, Hagen?" he asked the young arresting officer greedily.

Hagen was plainly shocked. He studied Lucy with a puzzled expression on his face. "You say this is Shayne's secretary?" he asked incredulously.

"Sure! Lucy Hamilton! Who did you think you had in tow?" the reporter said. "How about a story?"

"I—I—" He gulped and appealed to the night sergeant. "Is the chief in his office?"

"Yeh. He's expecting a report from you."

"Hold her right here," said Hagen nervously, "while I speak to the chief. I don't—uh—know what the charge will be." He released Lucy's arm and hurried down the corridor to Gentry's private office.

Lucy shrugged and sat down on the wooden bench in front of the desk. It was evident that the desk sergeant had never seen her before, and she was determined to play her present rôle until she was called into the chief's office.

When Hagen returned, he looked subdued and harassed. "Come with me, Miss Hamilton," he grated. "The chief wants you." He took her by the arm and assisted her from the bench. When the reporter started to follow them, he turned and said curtly, "The chief said *alone.*"

"Hey! What's the charge?" the fat man called to him, but Hagen did not answer. He led Lucy firmly to a door in the rear and ushered her into Gentry's office.

The chief was savagely chewing on the cold butt of a black cigar. Hagen

plunked Lucy into a straight chair in front of his desk, and she said demurely:

"Good morning, Chief."

"What the hell kind of games are you and Mike playing, Lucy?" he demanded in a thunderous rumble.

She stiffened her shoulders and said, 'I want to see a lawyer."

"You're going to come clean and tell me what you were doing in Mrs. Carrol's hotel room. What's this story about some man jumping you there?"

She said, "I want to see a lawyer."

Gentry pounded his fist on his desk, took the soggy cigar from his mouth, glared at her and said slowly, "If you don't talk, Lucy, lots and fast, I'm going to have you booked as a common hotel thief, on every charge confessed by you to Officer Hagen."

Lucy clamped her lips tightly and said nothing.

The chief hurled the cigar-butt viciously in the general direction of a brass spittoon on the floor and stood up heavily. He said in a weary voice, "Book Miss Hamilton on the basis of her confession, Hagen. I'm going home to get a few hours' sleep."

Chapter Five

After leaving through the side door of the hotel unobserved, Michael Shayne long-legged it to his private garage and backed his black sedan out without turning on lights. He eased into the street and made a right turn before switching on his headlights, then drove swiftly to keep his four-o'clock appointment at 79th Street.

Relaxed behind the wheel, Shayne started at the beginning of the events. Someone, somewhere in Miami was representing himself as Michael Shayne, and in a divorce action! This sort of thing he would never touch, no matter what fee was offered. He shook his head viciously and went back to the two telephone calls immediately following Gentry's departure from the apartment. First, the man who had given his name as Ludlow, and apparently expected Shayne to know what he was talking about.

Ludlow had discovered Carrol's body, apparently reported it to the police, and now was panicky. He wanted to be assured that he could be kept in the clear. But, suddenly, Ludlow had come to the conclusion that Michael Shayne's voice didn't sound right. He had hung up.

Because Shayne thought it physically impossible, he was not ready to accept the hypothesis that someone had impersonated him. It was much more probable that Mr. Bates was lying. It was Bates who claimed to have contacted Michael Shayne from Wilmington and made all the arrangements, and claimed to have sent him money and corresponded with him. He wanted to know a great deal more about Attorney Bates.

He turned his thoughts to his second telephone caller, the man who had said:

"You wouldn't know my name . . . but it's very important. We must keep Nora out of it . . . ten thousand dollars to forget everything you know about tonight."

Ten thousand dollars! A nice round sum, as Shayne had told the man over the phone. But why was it being offered? That had not been made clear. Was this caller another who believed that he had set the scene for Mrs. Carrol's entrance to her husband's bedroom? Or did he know the truth and was offering Shayne money to keep still about what had actually happened?

There was almost no traffic on the boulevard, and the roadside filling-stations and refreshment stands were dark. The designated station on the southeast corner of 79th appeared to be deserted when Shayne pulled into the drive. Shayne parked in front of the pumps and cut off his motor. He looked at his watch and saw that it was three minutes past four. He yawned and took out a cigarette, leaned forward to press in the dashboard lighter.

There was a faint sound in the night silence at his right. He turned his head to see the figure of a man materialize in the faint moonlight, from the deep shadow of the station building.

The man moved toward his car, and Shayne watched. He was medium-sized and wore a hat that shadowed his face. He stopped beside the open right-hand window and asked cautiously, "Shayne?"

"Yeh. Expecting me?"

The man opened the door and slid into the seat, looking at Shayne curiously. He was young and thin-faced, with commonplace features and a blond mustache.

Shayne settled back and asked, "What's all this about ten grand?"

"Ten grand?" The young man laughed nervously. "I wouldn't know about that. I was just to meet you here, see?" He closed the car door and added in a cautious voice, "You drive west a ways on Seventy-ninth, while I watch to make sure there're no cops following."

Shayne took a long drag on his cigarette. "You mean you're not the man who telephoned me?"

"Gosh, no. I was sitting in this bar, see? There was this man sitting beside me and he asked did I want to make fifty dollars fast. Well, with me down to my last buck, I says 'Sure,' and then—" He paused, putting his head out the window to look back, and said nervously, "I'm supposed to make sure nobody follows us. You'd better start driving toward Little River a ways. Then I take you to him, see?"

Shayne started the motor and swung out into the intersection and west on 79th. "This man who hired you—what does he look like?"

"I dunno," said his companion uncertainly. "Middle-aged, I'd guess. Broad-shouldered and wearing horn-rimmed glasses."

"You were sitting in a bar," Shayne prompted. "When was that?"

"Half hour ago, I guess. I was sitting there just killing time with a last drink before going home. I hadn't noticed him much until he knocked over my drink. I started to get sore, but he apologized and ordered me another one. He was pretty excited about a newscast that was coming over the radio. Some fellow named Carrol was found dead in a hotel room.

"After he brought me another drink for the one he'd knocked over," the young man went on with evident relish, "he asked me if I'd listened to the murder report from the start—said he hadn't paid much attention until the murdered man's name was mentioned. He wanted to know if I'd heard them mention the dead man's wife."

He turned for another look at the deserted street behind them. "I told him they hadn't, and that sort of worries me now," he confided earnestly to the detective. "Because I hadn't been listening careful. I didn't hear them mention anything about the dead man's wife, but I thought he was just curious and didn't know it mattered much. So I said, 'No'—you know, the way a man will in a bar. Just making conversation, sort of. And then he asked me if they'd mentioned your name—Michael Shayne, a private dick. So I said 'No' again, and then he got up and went back to the telephone."

The man again looked back, then said, "It's okay, I guess. I got to be sure no cops follow us. That was the thing he told me to be careful about when he came back from telephoning. I don't get my fifty bucks if anything like that happens. Drive back to the boulevard now, and turn north."

Shayne reached the 79th Street intersection and again swung north on the boulevard. "How long do we keep up this game?"

"It's just a little ways now. Take it easy and I'll tell you. Is this really going to be a pay-off? Is that what you meant by asking me about ten

grand? That's what you dicks call ten thousand dollars, isn't it? Why's the guy so worried about you bringing the cops? Is he the murderer? Gosh, if I'd thought that, I'd've turned down his fifty bucks flat. But you're used to it, huh? Playing ball with murderers? Or was it maybe the wife that did it and he's covering up for her."

"I don't know," said Shayne absently. "How far is it now?"

The young man was peering ahead uneasily. "The next turn-off, I think. Yeh, that's it. To your right and down to the bay. That's where he said to bring you."

Shayne turned right off the boulevard, drove past a couple of small frame houses, and then along a deserted stretch of paved street that dead-ended against the shore of Biscayne Bay.

The moon was dipping low on the horizon and a faint predawn glow was in the sky. His headlights picked out a parked car at the end of the street, its front bumper touching the steel cable stretched across the road.

Shayne rolled up on the right side of the car and looked curiously into the front seat. It appeared to be empty.

As he bent slightly forward to cut off his lights and motor, a bomb seemed to explode against his head.

Chapter Six

The morning sun slanted through the windshield and one window of the car. Michael Shayne's body lay uncomfortably sidewise on the front seat.

Consciousness returned slowly. In his semicomatose state, Shayne imagined that he had slept in one position too long. He opened his eyes a crack; the bright sunlight stabbed like a lance, and a searing pain shot through his head.

He closed them quickly, and lay for a time trying to remember what had happened.

Bit by bit the incidents of the night floated through his mind in confused sequence, and all of a sudden he was possessed by a terrible anger—anger at himself for being so stupid, and at the punk who had taken a shot at him.

He pulled himself up slowly to a sitting position. His head throbbed painfully and he rested it on folded arms atop the steering wheel with his eyes closed.

After a while he shifted his position to look in the rearview mirror. A wave of nausea swept over him and pain throbbed at the rear of his right temple. His hairline partially concealed the raw wound, an abrasion between the earlobe and the right temple. There was considerable swelling, and a circle of dried blood around the injury. Opening the door, he got out and forced his cramped leg muscles to hold him erect as he staggered to the cable barrier. The other car was gone, of course, and his watch showed that the time was 9:18. He had been out cold for about five hours.

He ducked under the cable and made his way down the sloping embankment. He took a handkerchief from his hip pocket and wet it in salty bay water. Gingerly he took off his light suit jacket, finding bloodstains on the collar; he threw it across his left arm, and went up the incline with the damp handkerchief against his face.

He examined his car before getting in, and found a jagged hole in the metal top of the sedan, close to the windshield and almost directly above the steering wheel. The impact had pushed the jagged edges of metal outward, and he knew the gun had been fired from below, from inside the car.

It was all clear now: The young man, the supposedly innocent bystander, who had met him at the filling-station and told a glib story of being hired for the job of guiding him, had drawn a gun as Shayne drove up beside the waiting car. He had fired when Shayne was looking to the left, expecting danger from that direction.

It was a smart trick, Shayne conceded grimly, realizing that if he had not turned his head leftward and lowered it a little he would be lying in the front seat of his car with a bullet-hole through his brain. As it was, the shot had barely grazed the bone, but the impact had rendered him unconscious.

Again he swore at his stupidity. He was certain now that there had been no other man in the deal. He got into the car, opened the glove compartment and took out a pint bottle half filled with cognac. He drew the cork and drank deeply. It did not ease the pain, but the warmth of the liquor relaxed his stiffened limbs and cleared his mind. He started the motor, backed around and drove to the boulevard.

He stopped at the first drive-in he came to and went into a small foyer, where a rack of morning papers caught his eye. A *Herald* "extra" was inked across the front page in huge letters, and beneath it a headline in bold black type read:

MIKE SHAYNE'S GIRL FRIDAY JAILED

Shayne glared at the headline, picked up the paper and went into the restaurant with it tucked under his arm. He was spreading the paper out on the table when a shapely blonde clad in a yellow halter and sky-blue shorts came to his booth.

"A pot of coffee to start with," said Shayne tersely. "I'll order later."

"Coming up," she said, and whirled away.

Shayne began to read:

Petite, brown-haired Lucy Hamilton, long-time secretary and confidante of Private Detective Michael Shayne, was jailed early this morning on orders of Chief of Police Will Gentry. Miss Hamilton was charged with common burglary.

The arresting officer was Patrolman Mark Hanna Hagen, who was personally commended by Chief Gentry for apprehending Miss Hamilton and securing a full confession from her.

According to an exclusive interview granted by Officer Hagen to a representative of this paper, he surprised the prisoner lurking in the bedroom of a local hotel. Miss Hamilton had represented herself as the occupant of the room and obtained a key from the night clerk then on duty.

Miss Hamilton tearfully confessed to a long career of petty hotel-room thievery, aided by a male accomplice whose name she steadfastly refused to reveal.

Shayne was interrupted by the waitress with a pot of coffee and cup and saucer which she set before him. Shayne poured the coffee and sipped it as he resumed reading the *Herald's* version of Lucy's arrest.

The next paragraph told of the *modus operandi* as set forth in Lucy's confession—of Officer Hagen's frank admission that he'd had no idea whatever of the real identity of Miss Hamilton nor of the bombshell that would be exploded by her arrest. Thinking it merely a routine crime, the up-and-coming young officer immediately hustled her to Headquarters to book her on a Jane Doe warrant if she refused to give her name and the name of her accomplice. The account continued:

At Police Headquarters, however, she had the misfortune to be recognized by an eagle-eyed representative of the Herald *as none other than Lucy Hamilton, secretary to the notorious and headline-grabbing crime-buster, Michael Shayne.*

As soon as her identity was established, Miss Hamilton was taken before Chief of Police Will Gentry for questioning, where it is believed she refused to implicate her employer by naming him as her accomplice.

But when questioned on this point, Chief Gentry refused to give a statement to the press, stat-

ing only that Miss Hamilton had stood on her constitutional rights and refused to divulge further information without advice of counsel.

Shayne folded the paper, put it in his pocket, went to a telephone booth and dialed a number. When a man's voice answered, he grated: "Have you read the *Herald* extra?"

"Mike!" the voice exploded. "Of course I've read it. What the devil is this all about?"

"What have you done about it?"

"Nothing yet. I've practically blasted the telephone system trying to reach you—"

"Hell of a mouthpiece *you* are!" Shayne cut in bitterly. "Take your butt in both hands and get down there and release Lucy."

"Sure, Mike." The voice was placating, but worried. "What's it all about?"

"What the hell do you care?" Shayne interrupted hotly. "Get her out of jail. I need her at the office."

"Right. Where'll you be?"

"At my office. I'll expect her in half an hour."

SHAYNE hung up. All through the *Herald* article he had felt sick with a sense of guilt and responsibility for Lucy's predicament. Now that he had unloaded a part of it onto his lawyer's shoulders, he managed a semblance of a grin in appreciation of his secretary's determination not to involve him.

Eight minutes later, Shayne parked his car near his office on Flagler Street. Two huge plainclothesmen stood just outside his office door, and both appeared acutely uncomfortable at his approach. "Morning, boys," Shayne said pleasantly. "You here to drag me in for prowling hotel-rooms in the wee small hours of the morning?" He recognized one of the men—Len Sturgis.

Sturgis dragged a hat from his bald head and said, "Nothing like that, Shayne. You going to open up now?"

"Sure. Sorry I'm late." He unlocked the door, opened it and asked, "Been waiting long?"

"Not too long," said Sturgis.

They started to follow him inside, but Shayne blocked the doorway. "Only clients allowed inside."

"We got a search-warrant," Sturgis insisted. "Give us credit, Mike, for waiting instead of busting in before you got here."

Shayne hesitated, his lips flattening against his teeth. Then he stepped back. "All right. I give you credit for not breaking in. The joint is yours." He turned his back on them, crossed the reception-room and went into his private office, where he pulled out one of the steel drawers of a filing cabinet and reached inside.

"Hold it, Mike," Sturgis said from the doorway. "You know I can't let you destroy evidence."

"Evidence of what?" Shayne demanded.

"What we're looking for. Your file on Ralph Carrol. Copies of letters you wrote him, and his replies."

Shayne's hand came out holding a bottle of cognac. He said, "Everything in this cabinet is ancient history—including this cognac, I hope. You won't mind if I destroy a little of it?" He moved to an ice-cooled water jug and drew a glass of cold water, carried it back to his desk and sat down. "Go right ahead and examine my files. If you find anything on the Carrol case I'll be interested to see it."

"Where do you keep recent correspondence? No use tearing everything up."

Shayne poured cognac into a glass and took a drink. "You'll have to ask Lucy about the current files," he said. "I don't know where she keeps things."

"You know she's— She won't be here today," said Sturgis patiently.

"All right. So you lock her up on a bum rap and then come crying around because she's not here to help you go through my private papers." He settled back and lit a cigarette.

The telephone on Lucy Hamilton's desk rang. Shayne got up and hurried into the outer room. The other detective had turned hastily toward the phone and was reaching for it. Shayne slammed a big hand on his shoulder and jerked him back.

"Keep your hand off my phone!" All the frustrated rage that had been boiling inside the redhead since early morning was in his voice.

"Better be careful who you push around, shamus," the big plainclothesman growled while the phone continued to ring. "That call might be for us."

"You can take your telephone calls somewhere else. But not in my office," Shayne told him grimly.

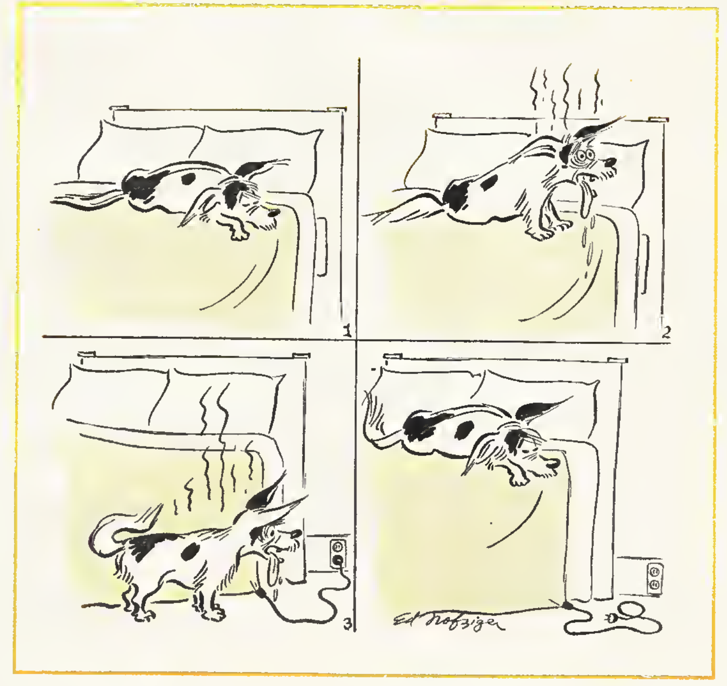
"Hold it, Gene." Len Sturgis spoke placidly from the inner doorway. "Let him answer his phone."

The detective stepped aside reluctantly and Shayne shoved him farther away with his shoulder as he picked up the receiver and barked, "Hello!" but all he heard was the buzz of the dial tone. He slammed the instrument down and turned to face the detective. "Next time you get in my way like that I'll give you a good excuse for putting me in a cell with my secretary."

He turned back to the desk, fumbled with the buttons, found and pushed the one that sent calls directly into his private office, then went back to his own desk.

Footsteps sounded in the outer office.

"Hi there, Gene! You taking over Miss Hamilton's job?"





Mike pulled open a file-cabinet drawer and reached inside. "Hold it, Mike," Sturgis said. "We can't let you destroy evidence." Mike grunted. "Evidence of what?" he demanded. "What we're looking for—your file on Ralph Carrol. Copies of letters you wrote him and his replies."

Timothy Rourke, the hard-bitten reporter from the *Daily News* and Shayne's closest friend, sauntered in, an amused and cynical smile on his face. He paused in the doorway of Mike's private office.

"Guess you'd better get hold of that young squirt you had here last winter when Lucy was on vacation," he said.

Mike Shayne scowled.

"You're going to need a secretary," the reporter went on, "according to Gentry—who is giving the incomparable Lucy the courtesy of the State."

MIKE ran his fingers through his hair and winced as he inadvertently touched the edge of his wound. He looked sourly at his old friend; but before he could frame a suitably withering reply, the quick tap of high heels echoed in the outer corridor. Shayne shoved his chair back and stood up as Lucy Hamilton entered. She still wore the light suit and yellow scarf, and looked trim and personable despite her incarceration. She smiled tremulously and hurried to him, blinking tears from her brown eyes.

Shayne stepped around the desk and took her in his arms and held her tight. Timothy Rourke watched the scene with amusement. "My kingdom for a camera," he declaimed. "If I could only get a shot of this and print it with the caption *All Is Forgiven,* I might get myself an extra, too."

Rourke was an old and privileged friend. Shayne grinned at him over Lucy's head, then he took his arm from around her waist and said, "Sturgis, here, and his pal out there have a search-warrant, angel. They're looking for our file on the Carrol case. Can you help them find it?"

Lucy shook her head and looked at Sturgis with astonishment. "Carrol? Carrol who?"

"Ralph Carrol," the detective supplied. "The guy who was bumped in the apartment right above Mike's last night."

"Then you're wasting your time," Lucy told him. "We don't have any file on any Carrol."

Shayne shrugged and said, "There you are, Len. Right from the horse's mouth." He patted Lucy's shoulder and added, "Show him where and how you file everything." He turned to Rourke who had lounged forward and was sitting on a corner of the desk swinging one thin leg back and forth negligently.

"Never a dull moment, eh?" chuckled Shayne.

Rourke leaned forward. "Where in heck have you been, Mike? And what happened to your head? Nobody's been able to locate hide or hair of you since you ducked out of your hotel about four o'clock. Will Gentry is fit to be tied."

"Gentry can go fly a kite," said Shayne shortly, ignoring the reference to his wound. He glanced aside at Lucy and Sturgis, busy at the filing cabinet, then asked Rourke in a low voice, "What do you know about this whole thing?"

"Only what I read in the *Herald*, and tidbits I've picked up here and there." Rourke spread out his bony fingers.

"I'll give you something just as soon as I get it myself," Shayne promised. He paused and listened to heavy footsteps in the outer office.

Will Gentry's voice rumbled, "Making any headway, Benton?"

"We haven't found anything yet, Chief."

"I didn't expect you to," Gentry told him gruffly.

The chief came through the inner doorway, looked at Shayne with weary eyes and growled, "Why did you send Lucy to Mrs. Carrol's hotel-room last night?"

"For the same reason you sent Hagen home with the Carrol woman, I guess. The way she acted I had a hunch that letter she said was signed by me might still be lying around. I wanted it."

"Why?" Gentry thundered.

"I was curious to see the signature. Damn it, Will," he burst out, "don't try to make something out of it what isn't there! If I were lying and trying to cover my tracks in this thing, it wouldn't do me any good to get hold of that particular letter. The Wilmington lawyer claims he has others signed the same way. If I were going to destroy hers, I'd have to get hold of his, too."

"That's what I've been thinking," the chief said ominously, "since getting a call from Bates in Wilmington. His office was burglarized last night and the file of correspondence with you has been stolen. Now, where were you between four and nine o'clock this morning?" He fixed his agate eyes on Shayne's purplish wound and fished a cigar from his breast pocket.

Chapter Seven

"Sit down, Will," Shayne said, "and let me get this straight. You say this lawyer in Wilmington claims his office was robbed last night—of the file on me?"

"That's right. Broken into early this morning. Nothing else taken. Just your letters to him and his carbons to you." Gentry pulled a chair nearer and sat down opposite Shayne, then turned to Detective Sturgis and said curtly, "You and Benton may as well beat it. You're not going to find anything here."

Sturgis left the room to the accompaniment of Shayne's blunt fingers drumming on the desk. Absently, Shayne said, "So Bates' alleged documentary evidence has disappeared."

"Conveniently. Did you go to all the trouble of flying up to Wilmington to steal that file?" the chief asked heavily. "Just tell me where you were between four and nine, Mike."

"You're not going to like it," Shayne warned him. "I was parked out on Biscayne Bay north of Seventy-ninth all that time, Will. All by myself."

"That's just fine," Gentry grunted. "That fixes everything up just dandy."

Shayne put a fingertip near the raw wound. "A bullet did this. A .45, I'd guess, from the size of the hole in the top of my car. Will it make things any better if I get a doctor's affidavit that a wound like that could knock me out cold for five hours?"

Lucy Hamilton hurried to him. "Michael!" she cried. "What is this all about? Who shot you? And why, Michael?" She examined the wound gravely and anxiously. "I'm going right out and get a bandage—"

"Sit down while I give this part of it to Will," he told her gruffly. "I'll fill you in on the rest of it later."

"There was a telephone call just after you left my apartment with Mrs. Carrol," Shayne told the chief. "The guy sounded drunk or frightened, and wanted to know if we could keep Mrs. Carrol's name out of her husband's murder investigation. I figured I'd learn more by playing him along, and agreed to meet him. I called Lucy and asked her to go over to the Commodore and try to find that alleged letter from me before Mrs. Carrol got there." He paused, turned to Lucy and suggested, "You give your end of it, angel. What was that junk in the *Herald* about your being attacked by some man?"

Lucy Hamilton's face flushed, and she sank back against her chair. "It *wasn't* junk! It happened exactly the way I told Officer Hagen. Just as I opened the door and turned on the light, someone threw a blanket over my head. . . . Someone who had evidently searched the room. Things from her suitcase were all scattered around. I just didn't know what kind of trouble you were in and I tried to play it safe." She looked at the chief, but his protuberant eyes were half-hidden by a puff of smoke. Timothy Rourke strolled to the water-cooler.

When Lucy's gaze turned to Shayne, the redhead gave her a crooked grin.

"You get a whole row of A's for effort, angel. And when we get this mess cleaned up Tim'll make you 'Heroine for a Day' in a *News* scoop."

Rourke stopped to pat her shoulder on his way back to his chair. "And we'll have a celebration. Just you and—"

Gentry interrupted him with an angry snort, and Shayne resumed:

"This man on the phone wouldn't give his name, but he offered me ten grand if I could make certain Mrs. Carrol's name would be kept out of the investigation."

"And now you're going to claim you sat in your car while he took pot-shots at you?" growled Gentry.

"Just about," Shayne conceded morosely. He settled back and related exactly what had happened. "It was nine o'clock when I woke up. I took time to clean the dried blood off my face with bay water and examine the car for a bullet-hole; then I headed toward town. I stopped on the boulevard for breakfast, and saw the *Herald* 'extra.' That was the first I knew about Lucy. I called my lawyer from the roadside restaurant, then came on to my office and found two goons waiting at the door with a search-warrant."

"Mike, do you expect me to believe that story?" Gentry asked.

"Take a look at the bullet-hole in my car. Get a doctor to look at my head and tell you what else besides a bullet could have done it. Analyze the blood on the cushion where I lay, passed-out, for five hours. You don't think I held a gun to my own head and pulled the trigger, do you?"

"I wouldn't be surprised," Gentry told him, somberly considering his cigar-butt before discarding it. "This fellow you claim you met at Seventy-ninth, he wouldn't be the one who jumped Lucy at the Commodore, I suppose."

"That's out," Shayne stated flatly. "He couldn't be. I started as soon as I finished talking to Lucy; by the time she got dressed and to the Commodore I must have been halfway out there. Yet he was waiting at the filling-station, after having parked his car by the bay and walked back to meet me."

"So that makes two little men whom no one can prove were there," Gentry growled. "Plus another one in Wilmington who broke into a lawyer's office and removed incriminating letters you claim weren't there. How can you expect me to believe any of this, Mike?"

Shayne said soberly, "I don't. But you can try."

"I am trying."

"Keep working on it," Shayne urged. "It'll come easier after a while. Once you make up your mind that I'm telling the truth, you'll be on the right track."

"But you can't prove a thing, Mike," the chief pointed out angrily.

"And you can't *dis*prove anything I say," Shayne responded with a shrug.

"I've got the statements of Mrs. Carrol and Bates," Gentry reminded him, "and they're in direct contradiction to yours."

"Okay. Let's analyze those statements. Take Bates' story of his contacts with me. He claims I replied to his first letter by demanding five hundred dollars in cash before taking the

case. You know damned well that's not the way I run my business. If I were going to accept the job, I'd do it and bill the client later.

"Wait a minute!" He held up a big hand to ward off Gentry's protest. "That's not all. Bates claims he suggested I get a key to Carrol's room for his wife's use in ending a divorce action. No matter what you believe about anything else I've told you, you know I'd have turned an assignment like that down flat. I don't fool around with that sort of thing at any price," Shayne ended in a tone heavy with disgust.

Gentry's face was impassive. He shifted his weight wearily in the straight chair. "But for a promise of ten thousand in connection with—" he began.

"And if I were going to take a job like that," Shayne cut in, as though completely absorbed in his own thoughts and unaware of the chief's words, "I sure as hell wouldn't spot the guy in my own hotel to do the job."

"It would make it easier for you to pull," Gentry pointed out with a weary sigh, "as Bates explained to me over the phone."

"I'd be a hell of a detective if I couldn't get a duplicate key from any hotel in town," Shayne growled.

"Then who furnished Mrs. Carrol with a key to your room last night?" Gentry exploded.

"That's what we've got to find out." His head wound throbbed in a dull, steady pain, and his voice was suddenly weary.

"Damn it, Mike,"—Chief Gentry's face look apoplectic—"are you trying to build up a hypothesis that someone impersonated you in this whole affair?"

"Either that," said Shayne slowly and thoughtfully, "or Bates is lying from the word *go*. Bates claims he wrote directly to me in the beginning. Lucy would have a record of any such letter if it had reached me here." He paused briefly, glanced at Lucy, noted Timothy Rourke's slaty eyes burning excitedly in their cavernous sockets, then turned back to Gentry's blank stare. "If Bates' correspondence ever reached this office, there is only one thing you can believe and will have to accept, Will, and that is that Lucy double-crossed me and decided to play detective on her own. Knowing that I wouldn't touch a divorce case, she answered the letter, giving my name and her own apartment address. But I don't think Lucy is that hard up for five hundred bucks."

"Michael! You can't believe for a moment that—"

"Of course not," he assured her. "And if you *had* pulled such a stunt I'm sure you wouldn't have given a dame a key to my apartment after midnight! So you see, Will, there just isn't any explanation for the stunt."

The telephone on Shayne's desk rang. As he reached for it, Gentry pushed forward in his chair. "That may be for me," he said. "I'm expecting an important call and left word at my office to transfer it here."

Shayne had the receiver to his ear and his palm over the mouthpiece as Gentry spoke. "Yes?" After listening for a moment he said, "That's quite correct. Give it to me slowly while I make a note of it."

Lucy was out of her chair, pushing a pad and pencil within reach of his right hand, and stood beside the desk watching and listening and frowning at the notes he made on the pad.

He said, "Yes, I have all that. Thanks very much for your co-operation, and if there's anything further I'll contact you." He hung up and shoved the pad toward his secretary. "On the Mitchell case, Lucy: That was a Mr. Levine, general manager of the Argus Trucking Company. His records show that Mitchell did take a truck out without authorization at ten o'clock yesterday morning."

> Friendship between two women is always a plot against each other.
>
> —ALPHONSE KARR

Lucy dutifully took shorthand notes of every word her employer spoke, placing them on the pad beneath his own scribblings.

"That cleans up the Mitchell thing," Shayne added briskly. "Suppose you let me know as soon as you get more detailed information from Wilmington, Will. I still think Bates should come down here so we can question him about those letters and phone calls he claims to have had from me."

Gentry, his eyes inscrutable, said, "Yeh," wearily, and stood up. "I'll send the doc over to look at your head, and have my boys check your car. If the external evidence checks with your story we'll have a little more to go on."

"Sure. My car is in the parking lot around the corner. You might try for fingerprints, but I doubt if you'll find any. After putting me out like a light, he had plenty of time to wipe everything clean." Shayne pushed his chair back and got up to accompany the chief to the outer office.

Gentry said to Rourke, "Coming along, Tim?"

The reporter shook his head lazily. "I'd like more of a fill-in from Mike. I'll be around for a statement before we go to press, Chief."

Gentry moved with his usual solid tread. Shayne strode past him and opened the door to the outer office. As the chief went out, he said, "This is a cockeyed case, Will. I'll keep in touch with you."

"Vice versa," Gentry supplied in a clipped voice. "Don't worry."

Shayne stood for a moment listening to the chief's footsteps going toward the elevator. His thumb and forefinger massaged his left earlobe. Then he turned and strode purposefully back to his office.

Rourke was pacing the floor, his thin nostrils flaring and his slaty eyes burning in their deep sockets. He stopped, faced the redhead, and asked, "What is the Mitchell case, Mike?"

"Oh, that." Shayne sat down at the desk, glanced at Lucy who looked up from the note-pad in her hand with round, questioning eyes. He drew in a deep breath and said, "I may as well give it to you, both of you. That call was actually for Gentry from some clerk at the airport who'd been checking flights to Wilmington for Will. He had been given this number to call, and mistook me for Gentry when I answered." Shayne poured himself a short drink of cognac. "Their records show that Michael Shayne bought a round-trip ticket to Wilmington on the four-twenty plane this morning and returned on a flight arriving here at nine-ten. There is going to be hell to pay when Will finds out about this."

After a moment of shocked silence, Rourke whirled to face his old friend and said, "Then your story about getting shot was a phony?"

"No, there was nothing phony about that," Shayne told him grimly. "But we know now that there *is* some guy representing himself as Michael Shayne and he is right here in Miami, *impersonating me*. It's dollars to doughnuts he flew up to Wilmington for the express purpose of removing the files on his correspondence with Bates."

"Then he must be the man who threw the blanket over my head in Mrs. Carrol's hotel-room last night," Lucy said excitedly. "He could have—"

"Probably," Shayne interrupted. "We can assume he was there searching for the same letter I hoped you'd find. He began picking up the pieces and destroying evidence after he learned that Carrol was dead."

"This seems to eliminate the theory that Bates was lying," Rourke suggested. "Wasn't it Sherlock Holmes who said that after you've eliminated the impossible, whatever remains must be the truth, no matter how improbable?"

"I've got to find out who murdered Carrol," Shayne went on, "and who left me in my car for dead this morning—and who the devil is parading around as Mike Shayne."

Gloom settled over Rourke's cadaverous features. "That's a fair-sized order. It appears no one has actually seen the guy, and now the letters have disappeared. Where do you start this case?"

"With Ralph Carrol's murder." Shayne's voice was abruptly vigorous and decisive. "In the end, everything must come back to that. You know anybody in Wilmington who can give me a hand getting the inside dope if I fly up there?"

The reporter thought for a moment, then said, "There's Ed Smith on AP. He's run their desk there for years. Want me to call him?"

"Sure." The telephone rang as he spoke. He gestured to Lucy to take the call, saying, "Get rid of whoever it is. I think you'd better come with me, angel. Call the airport about planes, but don't use my name for a reservation."

Lucy drew her chair nearer the desk, picked up the receiver and said sweetly, "Mr. Shayne's office."

"You stay here, Tim," Shayne said to the reporter. "Keep an eye on things and dig everything you can out of Will."

He turned as Lucy said into the mouthpiece, "Hold on a moment, Mr. Margrave. I think Mr. Shayne will be most interested." She leaned forward and whispered, "Would you be interested in investigating the murder of Ralph Carrol? A Mr. Margrave is very anxious to retain you in that capacity." She quickly covered the mouthpiece with her palm when Shayne said:

"Frankly, this is one time I can be had, and I won't argue about the size of the retainer." He took the phone and said, "Mike Shayne speaking."

Chapter Eight

Shayne listened attentively for a while, then said, "I understand perfectly, Mr. Margrave, and I'm glad to say I'm free to go right to work on it. I'll want all the information you can give me about Carrol."

He paused again to listen, and said, "The Roney Plaza. In about half an hour."

He hung up and grinned exultantly at Lucy and Tim Rourke. "Looks as if I won't need that plane reservation to Wilmington. Mr. Margrave is Ralph Carrol's business partner, who *happens* to be vacationing on the Beach, and he's quite displeased with the way the local police are investigating Carrol's death."

The lanky reporter's brows were drawn together in a frown of concentration. "Margrave," he muttered to himself, then suddenly jerked himself erect. "Wait a minute! There was an interview with him in the *Herald* a few days ago. A blast at the pernicious methods Big Business uses to run small competitors out of the picture. I think his firm faces a lawsuit brought against them for alleged theft of patents or some such."

Shayne thought for a moment before saying, "This gives me a basis of operation, anyway. A good starting point."

"Does Margrave know you have a personal reason for taking the case?" Rourke asked.

"I don't believe so. That's something I haven't thought through. How many people in this affair are contacting me in the belief that I'm the pseudo Mike Shayne who was handling the job for Carrol? How about that, Tim? Has my name been mentioned publicly in connection with Carrol? I didn't read the paper beyond the story of Lucy's arrest."

"I don't think your name was mentioned in the *Herald* story about Carrol."

"Then it couldn't possibly have been on the early newscast." He paused, fingers drumming on the desk and his eyes thoughtful. "The two phone calls had to come from people who knew Mike Shayne was supposed to be smuggling Mrs. Carrol into her husband's room. The calls came to me because they didn't have a phony number to call, and simply asked Information. Have you heard the name Ludlow mentioned in connection with Carrol?"

Rourke shook his head. "Who's he?"

Shayne related details of the first call he had received just as Mrs. Carrol and Gentry were leaving. "The man who called in the anonymous tip on Carrol, evidently. Beyond that I haven't the faintest idea who Ludlow is or how he came to discover Carrol's body." He sprang up and the swift movement brought a sharp throb to his injury. "Does your car happen to be around close, Tim?"

"Right out front in the No-Parking zone."

"How about loaning it to me for a run over to the Beach? If I pull mine out of the parking lot before Gentry has gone over it, he'll be sore and accuse me of hiding something."

"He was going to send a man over to examine your head, too," Lucy said anxiously. "Shouldn't you wait here for that?"

"I really would need to have my head examined," Shayne said witb a grin, "if I hung around for that, instead of getting over to find out what Margrave knows! Where are your keys, Tim?"

Shayne caught the tossed keys with his left hand and waved his right.

"Don't you worry, angel," he flung over his shoulder as he hurried out. "See you later."

Half an hour later the redhead entered the luxurious lobby of the Roney Plaza Hotel. He found the door to Margrave's suite slightly ajar. He pushed the button and a voice called immediately, "Come in."

A wide entrance hall opened onto a spacious living-room, luxuriously furnished. Wide windows overlooked the Atlantic. The curtains were drawn back and the morning sun streamed into the room. Shayne blinked at the brightness and at the man sitting beside a dining-table near the windows.

He was a big man with coarse black hair that looked as though it hadn't been combed for days. He had heavy black brows, a square face with a bulbous nose and an aggressive jaw.

"Mr. Margrave?" Shayne inquired.

He nodded, then boomed, "You're Shayne, I take it. Pull up a chair and join me."

"I've had breakfast, thanks." Mike Shayne's feet sank into the deep carpet as he crossed to the table. He moved a comfortable chair nearer the table and sat down facing his host, who was spearing half a fried egg and a generous portion of ham which he crammed into his big mouth.

Shayne was fishing a cigarette from the pack in his pocket when a woman's voice suggested, "Maybe you'd prefer to share *my* breakfast, Mr. Shayne."

He turned his head slowly and saw her curled up on a rose-silk divan against the opposite wall. She was young and startlingly beautiful, with hair so black that it shone in the sunlight with a glossy, bluish sheen. By contrast, her face appeared unnaturally white, relieved only by a bright crimson gash that was her mouth. She wore a white nylon gown beneath a sheer silk dressing-gown belted tightly around her slender waist, and a pair of white satin slippers lay on the couch where she had kicked them from her bare feet.

She held a highball glass in one hand. A bottle of whisky and ice cubes in a silver bucket stood on the coffee table beside her. Mike stared at her in astonishment. She lifted her glass to her lips and returned his gaze with curiosity.

"Nonsense, Ann." The gruff asperity of Margrave's voice was muffled by the food in his mouth. "I've told you a thousand times that no sane person touches the stuff before lunch. You're turning into a lush, and I don't like it."

Shayne shifted his chair to a vantage-point which included them both.

Margrave swallowed, took a gulp of black coffee and said, "My daughter has an idea it's smart and modern to get half-tight at breakfast and stay that way all day. She simply doesn't understand that no man could conduct business in that state. You tell her."

"On the contrary," Shayne told him gravely, "I think it's an extremely good idea." He lifted a goblet of ice water from Margrave's breakfast table, emptied it into the silver pitcher and went across to the girl, saying, "Will you pour, Miss Margrave? Or *is* it Miss Margrave?"

A mischievous light twinkled in her eyes. "It is," she said, "but anyone who defies my father and drinks with me at breakfast must certainly call me Ann." She set her glass down and reached toward the bucket. "Ice, Mr. Shayne?"

"A couple of chunks and make it Mike."

STANDING with his back to Margrave, he looked down with interest and pleasure at the sinuous body of the girl as she put ice in his glass and poured whisky over it. She was in her early twenties, he thought; long-limbed and lithe.

Margrave cleared bis throat loudly and warned, "You'll need a clear head for this business, Shayne. I have no intention of paying out good money for nothing."

Without turning his bead, Shayne said, "That's right. You haven't hired me yet, have you? So I'm just a guest, Ann, and you needn't spare the horses."

The mischievous twinkle in her eyes spread over ber face and she poured more whisky. Shayne turned back to the table with the half-filled glass. "I always like to get certain things straight in the very beginning," he went on to Margrave. "I get paid for results in my work, and the way I achieve those results is entirely my affair." He sank into his chair, took a drink of liquor, and asked evenly, "Do you want to discuss your partner's death? Or shall I just have this drink and forget the whole thing?"

"I do want to discuss Ralph Carrol's murder," Margrave answered testily. "I want to retain you on the case. I merely thought—that is, I learned a long time ago that if I take one drop of liquor in the morning I'm knocked out for the rest of the day," he added defensively.

"Some people are like that," Shayne conceded. "Why call me in, Mr. Margrave? What makes you think I can do more than the police?"

"The police!" snorted Margrave. "They're hamstrung. They've had their orders already, you can be sure of that. What have they accomplished thus far? Nothing! And they won't. You're different. At least I've heard you are. They say when you take a case you follow through, come hell or high water, and no matter whose toes get stepped on."

"Whose toes," asked Shayne with interest, "are the police avoiding this time?"

"Their masters', of course. The entrenched power of illimitable wealth. Big Business. My partner was assassinated, Shayne, because he dared to stand up like a man and challenge the Vulcan Chemical Corporation of Delaware. That is *lèse majesté* in these United States."

"Wait a minute," said Shayne. "Are you implying that the Miami police department takes orders from Vulcan?"

"Not directly, of course. But good God, man! Let's not quibble. It is the power of monopoly that has been challenged. When Ralph Carrol could not be bought off or frightened off, he was removed—as an object lesson to any individual who has the integrity and courage to stand up against the entrenched Interests."

Shayne settled back and said, "You'd better give me the whole story."

"I shall." Margrave pushed his plate aside. "Carrol was a research chemist—a genius. He was hired by Vulcan when he graduated from college six years ago and placed in their laboratories. He worked diligently on a miserly pittance for more than five years. He developed various processes over that period, which earned millions for the corporation.

"A year ago Carrol took stock of the situation. He wasn't embittered, you understand. He had accepted the position with Vulcan, fully realizing that he was placing his brains and ability at their service in exchange for the salary they paid him. But was it a fair exchange?"

The monologue rolled out smoothly and without pause. "A continued pittance in exchange for ideas which were worth millions! In the end, after years of faithful service—a miserly pension until he died.

"That is what Ralph Carrol clearly foresaw in the future, sir, as he stood at the crossroads of his life, and took stock. He had no capital to fall back on, only his supreme confidence in his own genius and ability.

"To make a long story short, he resigned his position and came to me for advice. We formed a partnership and set up a small laboratory. And there, in six months' time, on his own initiative, and spurred on by the knowledge that he would be allowed to retain a fair share of the profits in any new discovery made by him, he perfected a new plastic which will undoubtedly revolutionize the industry. It is worth millions." Margrave paused impressively. "Once we get into large production, all the previous plastics will become obsolete. You can easily see the tremendous stake a firm like Vulcan has in such a discovery. You can easily understand the lengths to which they might go to suppress the new process or to gain control of it for themselves."

"Even to murder?" asked Shayne dubiously.

Margrave shrugged his massive naked shoulders. "Let us not be naïve, Shayne. What is one man's life to a corporation—one man who stands between them and millions of dollars in profits? You're not a child. I imagine you've investigated many murders committed for a few hundred dollars."

"But will Carrol's death stop the manufacture of the plastic?" Shayne asked. "Certainly, you're not going to tell me that the secret process died with him and that you can't go on with it."

"No. But as soon as Vulcan learned about Ralph's discovery, they immediately brought suit. They claim it actually belonged to them. The suit is now pending before the courts of Delaware."

"On what grounds?"

"They base their suit on the allegation that Ralph actually made the discovery in their laboratories and while in their employ. He was working under a contractual agreement, you understand, which stipulates that any discovery made by him while in their employ becomes the property of the corporation. It is their contention that Ralph realized the tremendous value of the discovery as soon as he came upon it, and that he suppressed the truth, resigned, and took his secret with him for his own private enrichment."

MIKE SHAYNE nodded slowly. "If they can prove that, I suppose they would win the suit."

"Absolutely. *If* they can prove it! Which they can't, of course. There's not a word of truth in it. Ralph Carrol was an honorable man. When he left Vulcan he took nothing with bim but his own genius. The process was developed completely in our laboratory. This we can prove beyond the shadow of a doubt."

Shayne picked up his drink which was now well diluted with melted ice. "Tell me in exactly what way Carrol's death will benefit Vulcan."

"With Ralph out of the way and unable to testify in his own behalf tbey have a better than fifty-fifty chance of winning judgment against us," said Margrave bitterly. "Ralph Carrol himself was the only person on

earth who knew exactly wbat went on during those months they claim he was working on the process. Now that threat has been removed neatly by the simple expedient of murder. Who else had a motive? Who else was ruthless and powerful enough to hire assassins to do the job?"

Shayne drank a third of the watery liquor and set the glass back on the table. "You haven't anything else to go on?" he demanded. "No actual proof at all?"

"Naturally not. That's up to you. Find the man or men who drove the knife into Ralph's heart, and you'll find the Vulcan Corporation behind it. Once you have the actual killer, I think it won't be too difficult to prove whose money hired him."

Shayne said, "I see. Now just for the record, what about Carrol's private life? Any motive for murder there?"

"None," Margrave asserted vigorously. "He was a fine young man. Not an enemy in the world."

"Do you know his wife?" Shayne asked casually.

"Very well indeed. Nora's a wonderful woman—loyal to the core."

Shayne turned his head at a curious sound from the divan across the room. He saw Ann Margrave set her glass down and clamp a handkerchief to her mouth. She stood up suddenly and drawing the robe tightly about her slim body, started for one of the bedrooms. "You'll have to excuse me," she said in a muffled tone.

Margrave scarcely glanced at his daughter as she went out, but continued, "I realize you will want to check every possibility, and I expect you to do so. But I'm certain you'll find nothing in Ralph's private life that could possibly have led to murder. There's only one answer and, by God, I bope you are the man to come up with it, since the police refuse to listen to me."

Shayne gently tugged at his left earlobe. "I suppose you know that Nora Carrol was in Miami last night?"

"Indeed?" Margrave looked surprised, but not unduly so. "Poor child. I imagine she had come down to plead with Ralph again not to go through with his contemplated divorce. He was making a grave mistake, as I told him more than once."

"I have it on good authority that Carrol had unquestioned grounds for his divorce."

Margrave's heavy face clouded and he made a gesture with a big hand as though brushing aside an annoying insect. "Legally, yes," he admitted with a sigh. "I believe Nora was—ah—indiscreet. While under the influence, you understand. But who are we to sit in judgment on a fellow-being? Let him who is without sin cast the first stone. I said that to Ralph. I talked to him like a father about Nora. 'How sinless are you?' I asked him. 'Did you come to marriage with clean hands? Have you never given way to temptation?' " He sighed again and shook his tousled head. "But Ralph was young and passionately jealous. He seemed determined to humiliate Nora publicly."

"Who was the man in the case?" Shayne asked.

"Eh? Oh, I see. The entire subject is distasteful to me," said Margrave reluctantly, "but it is a matter of public record. Young Ted Granger was named co-respondent by Ralph. His own cousin, by the way. A harmless but foolish young man. It's my impression that he was wholly to blame for the entire affair and that he was hopelessly in love with Nora."

Shayne took another long swallow of his drink and made a grimace of distaste. "Who recommended me to you, Mr. Margrave?" he demanded abruptly.

"What's that? No one directly recommended you. I've heard of your reputation, naturally, and several months ago in connection with another affair entirely I happen to know that my attorney had you discreetly investigated with the view of retaining your services."

"What's the name of your attorney?"

"Mr. Bates, in Wilmington."

"Was he also Carrol's lawyer?"

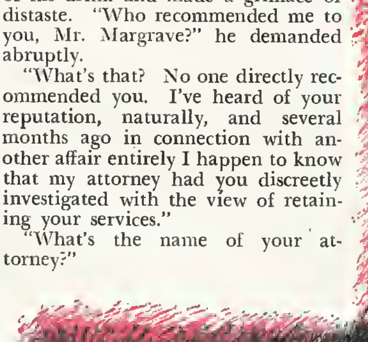
"Bates handles all the legal affairs of our firm."

"What was the nature of the other affair when I was considered and investigated?" Shayne persisted.

"It was a personal matter," Margrave told him curtly. "It can have no possible bearing on Ralph Carrol's death."

"I'll have to be the judge of that."

"Very well," the big man agreed reluctantly. "Ralph received some nasty anonymous letters. He was furious and he wanted a detective





"Nora's loyal to the core," Margrave asserted. Shayne turned and saw Ann choking as if her drink had gone down the wrong way. She clamped a handkerchief to her mouth and fled.

brought in, but I was able to persuade him to drop the matter."

Ann Margrave re-entered the room as her father spoke. She looked stunning in a clinging white sports frock. She spoke in a flat voice, "I'm going out. 'By, Pops. Good-by, Mike."

Shayne came to his feet, holding his almost empty glass up in a salute. "Good-by, and thanks for the breakfast."

She said, "You're very welcome," in the same flat tone, and went out.

"These modern children," said Margrave heavily. "I won't see Ann again until she comes reeling home this evening."

Shayne set his glass on the table and remained standing. "What sort of anonymous letters were they?"

"What's that? Oh, the ones Ralph received? Nasty, scurrilous things."

"Having to do with his wife?"

"Yes. Accusations against Nora. Will you take the case, Shayne?"

"Gladly. I'll want to see Bates and learn all I can about the Vulcan lawsuit."

"Of course. I assure you that is the crux of the matter. Mr. Bates is coming down today, I believe. He telephoned me early this morning as soon as he was informed of Ralph's death. I'll let you know as soon as he arrives. I'll be glad to give you a retainer—any reasonable amount. I want you to spare no expense whatever in pinning this murder where it belongs."

Shayne said, "Mail a check for a thousand to my office. I'll be in touch with you." He turned away, suddenly impatient to be away from Mr. Margrave.

He hurried from the elevator and was halfway across the lobby when Ann Margrave caught his arm, and said intensely, "I've got to talk to you. How about you buying *me* a drink?"

Shayne said, "Fine. Here? Or some place else?"

"Some place else," she said with decision. "If Father saw us together, he'd kill me."

"I've got a car outside. Let's go."

Chapter Nine

THEY WERE BOTH SILENT as Shayne wheeled the borrowed car out of the Roney driveway. Ann Margrave sat tense and still beside him, staring ahead, her gloved hands gripping the small purse in her lap.

Glancing aside through narrowed lids, he saw the angry curl of her red mouth and the determined chin. His own muscles were tense, his mind curious, but he didn't push her with any questions. He drove a few blocks, and pulled up in front of a small restaurant and bar where he knew the drinks were good. They went into a long, air-conditioned room with a small bar near the entrance.

Shayne took Ann's arm and led her to the rear, selecting the last booth. When they were settled, facing each other across the narrow table, she looked at him with an odd intensity in her light blue eyes, and for the first time since meeting her, Shayne saw a tinge of color in her cheeks.

"I'm *not* a drunkard," she denied vehemently, as though Shayne himself had just accused her. "It's just that—oh, damn it, I like to get Pops' goat. When he starts pontificating about this and that, I want to scream. So I take a drink instead."

"Does that help?" Shayne asked gravely.

"Enough of them do."

Shayne held up a warning hand for silence when he saw the waiter approaching. "Now, what'll you have?" he asked casually.

"What would you suggest?" she said, taking the cue.

"Black coffee."

"That will be fine," Ann Margrave told the waiter. "With a double slug of cognac in it, please."

Shayne lifted his ragged red brows and grinned appreciatively. "The same for me, but plain, with a glass of iced water on the side instead of coffee."

When the waiter went away, Ann said, "I simply had to talk to you. I thought I'd retch back there when you asked Pops if he knew Nora and he said she was 'wonderful.'" Venom dripped from her voice.

"Isn't she?"

"She's a bitch on wheels." Her eyes were as cold as blue ice, but after a moment the angry curl of her lips relaxed, and she went on in a tired, flat tone: "She ruined Ralph's life. She's as much to blame for his death as though she stabbed him herself—which she was perfectly capable of doing, and probably would have if she'd been around last night."

Shayne settled back, took a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and held them across to her. She took one and leaned forward to light it from his match. He lit one for himself, and said, "So you disagree with your father about Mrs. Carrol's true character."

"I disagree with Pops about practically everything," she answered listlessly. "Did he happen to mention, for instance, that Nora was his mistress before she hooked Ralph?"

"No. He didn't mention that."

The waiter brought their drinks and at a signal from Ann poured the cognac into her coffee, then went away.

"Well, she was," she assured him. "For several months. Then she suddenly went after Ralph."

"Was this before your father and Ralph Carrol became partners?"

"Oh, yes. While Ralph still had his job with Vulcan, while he was still perfectly satisfied and happy with his work," she went on with gathering bitterness, "and when he could still call his soul his own and wasn't ashamed to look the world in the face."

Shayne warmed the brandy glass in his hands. "Tell me about Ralph. Had you known him long?"

"I've been in love with him ever since I was fourteen. That's nine years—and don't laugh."

SHAYNE said, "I'm not laughing, Ann." He took a sip of brandy and waited for her to continue.

"Maybe it was a silly girl crush in the beginning, but it turned into love as soon as I was old enough to know what love really is."

"Did Ralph reciprocate?"

"Ralph was always sweet to me. I'd see him on vacations when he was away at college, and later when he came back to Wilmington to work there. We weren't actually engaged," she went on with the appearance of striving to be honest and objective, "but he was coming to it. Then he met Nora, and everything was ruined."

"How long ago was this?"

"A little more than a year." Ann sighed and took a drink of black coffee laced with cognac. "Everything was different after that. Ralph changed completely. I don't know how she managed it." Her hand trembled as she set the cup down. "She just flung her sex in his face, I guess. He was always so shy and sweet. She overwhelmed him. Nora had had enough experience, heaven knows, and knew how to get a man she wanted. And she decided she wanted Ralph."

Shayne was silent for a moment, thinking hard. "And you say Nora had been having an affair with your father, prior to this?"

"Yes."

"Didn't Ralph mind?"

"I don't suppose he knew," she said with contempt. "I tried to tell him what she was, but it only made him fearfully angry. He said people misjudged her and that I was just nasty jealous."

"How did your father feel?" Shayne probed. "Didn't he mind losing her to Ralph?"

"Frankly, I suspected afterward it was something Pops and Nora cooked up together," she confessed after a brief hesitation, her brooding gaze fixed on Shayne. "To get Ralph away from his job and in partnership with Pops to make this new plastic. Because that's what happened. She

began working on Ralph. She convinced him he was being unfairly exploited by Vulcan. Up to that time he had been happy in his work. He never thought of complaining until Nora got her hooks into him."

"Do you think it possible that Ralph might have dropped the divorce action and gone back to Nora?" Shayne asked.

"No. Ralph wasn't having any more. She had managed to twist him around her little finger once before when he was fed up and ready to quit, but this time it was for sure."

"This first time you mention, was that on account of the anonymous letters?"

Ann Margrave didn't try to hide her surprise at Shayne's abrupt question, but she parried with one of her own. "So Pops came clean with everything?" Her tone was one of ironic disgust.

"Perhaps not everything," Shayne said easily. "What do you know about it?"

"I know that Ralph tried to laugh them off, but I think they started him wondering."

"What did the letters accuse her of?"

"Oh, all sorts of things."

"Including her previous affair with your father?"

"Yes. He and Pops had a big row about that, and of course Pops swore up and down it was all a big lie. After the way she behaved with Ted Granger, I guess Ralph realized the letters weren't lies after all."

"And they never discovered who wrote the anonymous letters?"

"No." She looked at him steadily, but spots of high color flared in her cheeks. "They never did."

"So now we come to Ted Granger. Fill me in on him and exactly what happened."

"Ted's all right," she said carelessly. "Sort of an innocent bystander, and an awful fool. He's Ralph's cousin and doesn't amount to much, and there was this week-end party where Nora got tight and made a terrific play for him. But when they got caught and Ralph used that as grounds for divorce, Ted went heroic and took all the blame. Maybe one night with Nora was enough to make a man fall in love with her," she went on, her scarlet lips curling with contempt. "Ted mooned around and declared he'd marry her if she would have him. But she wanted Ralph. Or at least a good hunk of Ralph's money for alimony."

"Did Ralph have much money?"

"Only what he made from his invention. Of course, Pops says it's worth millions."

"Did you know that Nora had planned to make one last effort to get her husband back?"

"No. But I'm not surprised. I know she came down once before to work on him, but he wasn't having any."

"Then you didn't realize she was in Miami planning to see her husband last night?"

One look at Ann's face was enough to convince him she hadn't known. "Then Nora must have done it herself!" she burst out excitedly. "Well, if you really want to solve this case, Mike Shayne, you go after her instead of Vulcan."

"What would her motive be?"

"She wouldn't need a motive," Ann Margrave told him promptly, "except having Ralph spurn her again. She's got a vicious temper. You find out where she was when it happened. That's all."

Shayne grimaced and emptied his cognac glass. He didn't think it would be politic to tell the girl that it looked very much as though Nora Carrol had been in his bedroom at just about the right time.

"Who else might have known about Nora's plan?" he asked.

"Pops, I guess. And Mr. Bates, the lawyer."

"How about Ted Granger?"

Ann's eyes had grown dull and her tone was apathetic when she said, "I don't know why she would have told him. Unless, maybe, to stop him from mooning around her."

"What sort of man is Bates?"

"He's all right. Just a lawyer."

Shayne looked at his watch, caught the waiter's eye and beckoned to him, then asked, "Can I take you back to the Roney?"

"What for?" she demanded. "This is just as good a place to get tight as any."

Shayne cautioned, "Don't get too tight. I may need some more help from you later on."

The waiter came with their check. Shayne laid a bill on the tray. "After I go and the young lady has drunk that up, throw her out or make her buy her own."

The waiter looked at the bill, smiled, and said, "Yes sir," and went away.

Shayne said, "There's one more question right now, Ann. Do you know anyone named Ludlow?" He stood up abruptly.

She thought for a moment and shook her black, shining head slowly. "I've never heard the name. And if you must go, send that waiter back here with a double shot of the same, without coffee."

Shayne nodded and gave her a crooked grin. "You've been a big help, Ann. Call me if you think of anything else that might be relevant. Leave a message with my secretary if I'm not in."

He pressed his knuckles against her white cheek, said, "So long." Then he hurried out.

Chapter Ten

Back in his office Shayne settled down at his desk and hoped to get some answers to the dozens of questions chasing each other around in his mind. One of the most perplexing was exactly what Margrave had expected to gain by making his vehement and somewhat absurd accusation against the Vulcan Chemical Corporation.

Shayne knew that large, long-established and supposedly solid organizations sometimes engaged hatchet-men to gain certain objectives, mainly in the realm of labor relations. And he had not the slightest doubt that murders had been discreetly arranged in the past and would be in the future.

But the idea of Vulcan stooping to murder seemed incredible, especially when the method employed by the killer was a knife, actually a letter-opener evidently owned by Carrol himself. Hired killers were apt to use machine-guns after luring the victim into a certain position at a specified time.

Yet Margrave, the man who had willingly advanced a thousand-dollar fee and who insisted that no expense be spared, was positive that Vulcan had engineered Carrol's murder and expected Michael Shayne to prove this fact.

Against Margrave's sober and businesslike accusations there were those of his unsober and romantic daughter, Ann. Plainly bitter and frustrated, her long crimson nails eager to claw Nora Carrol's eyes out, she'd like nothing better than to have a verdict of guilty returned against Nora. Shayne shrugged. No one was accusing Nora of anything.

The wound in Shayne's head was throbbing dully, distracting his thoughts. He poured a drink of cognac into the glass on his desk and drank it, swiveled back in his chair and closed his eyes. The drink relaxed his body and eased the pain.

It was quite possible that Ann was blinded by her hatred of Nora. At the moment, Shayne was willing to bet a large sum that Ann was the author of the anonymous notes Carrol had received about his wife.

But the question of why Margrave had called him in on the murder investigation was still an enigma.

There was the matter of public relations, of course. Quite naturally, the police had refused to consider the Vulcan seriously. Perhaps Margrave

merely sought headlines and sensational news stories by hiring Shayne to investigate the corporation. It was an intriguing theory, and one that would be eagerly picked up by the press throughout the country if a man with Michael Shayne's reputation were to make such a statement. No matter how guiltless the corporation, or what the outcome of the investigation, some of the stigma would linger. It might well affect the judgment of a jury when the suit against Carrol's estate came to trial.

Another disquieting question at the moment was whether or not Margrave had been aware of Nora's plan to quash the divorce, and actually believed Michael Shayne to be the man who had arranged it for her. If so, he had certainly given no indication of that knowledge or belief during their interview. Still, it was quite possible, and Shayne considered the idea thoroughly.

Had Nora communicated with Margrave since Carrol's death to tell him how the plan had miscarried?

There were so many things he didn't know, he reminded himself irritably. He made a mental list:

The identity of Ludlow.

The identity and motive of the man who tried to kill him.

The identity of the man who had attacked Lucy in Nora's hotel-room.

The identity of the man who had represented himself to Bates as Michael Shayne, and the method by which he had carried on the impersonation.

Whether Nora Carrol had been furnished a key to his room by mistake, or for some definite reason. If the latter, for what reason?

Shayne swore angrily under his breath.

Ludlow came first. A voice in the telephone who had notified the police of Carrol's murder, and later called Shayne to ask whether he would be involved. The inference had been that if this was inevitable, Ludlow preferred to come forward and tell his story without being forced to do so.

It was quite clear, also, that he had telephoned Michael Shayne in the belief that he was talking to the man who had impersonated Shayne. A man who evidently had some part in the plan to put Nora Carrol in her husband's bedroom. Ludlow had said over the phone: *"He was dead when I got there."*

If Ludlow had called the police immediately, that placed him in Carrol's room just about the time Nora had entered Shayne's room.

Everything pointed to some sort of prearrangement. With Ann Margrave's information of the actual relationship between husband and wife, which was somewhat at variance with Nora's version, this began to make sense. Ann was positive that Ralph Carrol had ceased to love his wife and that a reconciliation was impossible. If this were true, Nora must have suspected that her husband would refuse to let her stay through the night.

Taking this as a reasonable hypothesis, if Nora was determined to hold her husband, the redhead reasoned, she might well have arranged such a frame-up with the detective who had called himself Shayne. Ludlow, then, might well be the witness who had planned to catch husband and wife together in the bedroom and whose testimony would serve to throw the divorce action out of court.

At this point in his thinking, Shayne took the classified telephone directory from a desk drawer, opened it at the P's and found the heading:

PHOTOGRAPHERS: COMMERCIAL

Running his forefinger down the list his eyes glinted with interest when he came to the name "Ludlow, John P" in small type. The address was on North Miami Avenue. He pressed a button for an outside line and dialed the number. A woman's voice answered, repeating the number.

Shayne said, "Mr. Ludlow, please."

"I'm sorry," the voice answered, "but Mr. Ludlow is not in."

"When do you expect him back?"

"I'm not sure." There was a brief pause, then "Can I help you?"

"I don't know." Shayne managed to sound a trifle uncertain and embarrassed when he added, "It's—ah—a rather delicate assignment. I was given Mr. Ludlow's name." He waited hopefully.

"I understand," the voice purred in encouragement. "And who is speaking?"

"Mr. Bigelow, of the law firm of Barnes, Bigelow and Carson," he improvised swiftly. "It's on behalf of one of our clients. I believe it would be better to speak directly to Mr. Ludlow. If you'll have him call me—"

"I'm sorry, sir, but Mr. Ludlow is out of the city for a few days. But our Mr. Pilcraft is very discreet. May I suggest I have him call you?"

"I prefer to make this arrangement with Mr. Ludlow himself. If you will tell me where he can be reached out of town—"

"I'm sorry, but I really can't say," she said, the purring quality gone from her voice.



"Throw it back, Ed—throw it back!"

"Could you give me his home telephone number?" he persisted. "I might get the information there."

"I can't give out that information. If you'd like Mr. Ludlow to call you when he returns—"

"It won't be necessary," he told her, and hung up. He took out the alphabetical directory and searched through the L's. This yielded a N.W. 18th Street address for John P. Ludlow. Shayne dialed it and another woman's voice said, "Yes?"

"I'd like to speak to Mr. Ludlow, please."

She said, "He's not here," and hung up.

Shayne settled back and rubbed his jaw reflectively. It looked as though he had struck pay dirt. He got up abruptly and went into the outer office.

He paused at Lucy Hamilton's desk and said, "If Tim calls, tell him his car is parked in front where it was before. Here are the keys." He tossed them on the desk, looked at his watch and added, "You stay in till I get back, huh? Have some lunch sent it. There may be some calls."

"Of course. But Michael—"

"Hold the questions, angel," he said on his way to the door, "until I get some answers."

He closed the door quietly and long-legged it to the elevator.

At the parking lot, an excited attendant hurried over to tell him that the police had been there going over his car. Shayne got behind the wheel and started the motor, saying, "It's okay, Jim," and drove away.

The Ludlows' number on 18th Street was a small stucco bungalow in the middle of a row of small stucco bungalows. A little girl of three or four was making sand-pies in a sandbox under a coconut palm in the unkempt yard. She looked up and watched Shayne gravely as he went up the walk to the front door and rang the bell.

A woman came to the door wiping her hands on her apron. There were lines of irritation and worry on her thin face, her lips were tight and her eyes coldly wary as she surveyed the stranger on her doorstep.

"Mrs. Ludlow?" he inquired.

"Yes." She stood at the hooked screen door and made no move to open it.

"I'm very anxious to see Mr. Ludlow," Shayne told her smoothly. "I called his office but the girl said he was out and that you might be able to tell me where to reach him."

"Was that you who called a while ago?" she demanded.

"Yes." Shayne tried what he hoped would be a disarming smile. "My business with your husband is so important that I thought I'd run out and explain personally."

"What business?" she demanded in a clipped voice.

"I represent a local firm employing more than a thousand people, and we want to have individual photographs taken at once for use on a new type identification badge we're issuing."

"Why pick out Jack for a job like that?" She spoke with bitterness, and from her words Shayne felt she implied that there were many better-known commercial photographers in Miami who would be more logical choices for such an assignment.

"It happens to be a personal contact with one of our executives," Shayne explained. "Naturally, we don't like to go over his head, and besides, I gathered he was an old friend of Mr. Ludlow's."

"I see." For an instant hope came into her eyes, but it went away. "It's just our luck for him to pull a stunt like this when something good was coming up. I don't know where he is," she ended listlessly. "He phoned this morning and said he'd be away a couple of days on business. He never tells me anything." Her voice was weary. "Ask that big blonde he keeps down at the studio—he tells *her* things, I guess."

"I see," said Shayne gently. "Thank you very much, Mrs. Ludlow."

He went back to his car and drove slowly to Ludlow's studio, between a shoeshine parlor and a delicatessen. Faded lettering on the door read: *Ludlow Photographic Studio*. Beside the door was a plate-glass window with heavy draperies drawn.

Shayne hesitated for a moment with his hand on the doorknob, then shrugged, opened the door and heard a bell tinkle inside.

He entered a small square studio furnished with two easy chairs, a couch, several large movable light fixtures on adjustable standards with huge silver reflectors, and a portrait camera mounted on a tripod in one corner. Against one wall was a luridly painted backdrop depicting a beach with palm trees reaching out of the ocean. A covering of dust on everything gave the room the appearance of disuse.

A narrow corridor led back along the right-hand wall, and as Shayne closed the street door he heard the clack of high heels on the bare floor.

She was blonde, not more than three inches shorter than Shayne, and carried at least as many pounds, which were strategically distributed. She paused just inside the studio and studied the redhead with a direct, pleasant gaze that was frankly curious.

"Something I can do for you?" she asked.

"That will depend on a lot of things," said Shayne with a grin. "Are you married, for instance, and is the guy the jealous type."

She studied him impersonally. "You didn't come here to ask me that."

"No. It just popped out. Is Jack around?"

"No. You a friend of his?"

"From 'way back. I've always felt kind of sorry for Jack, knowing his wife—but he never mentioned you."

She showed signs of thawing and took a couple of steps forward as though about to ask him to have a seat when the telephone in the back room rang. She said, "Excuse me a minute," and went to answer it.

Shayne followed her down a short hall to a door that opened into a small, cluttered office. The telephone was on a desk to the right of the door and her back was toward Shayne as she leaned over to answer it.

She said, "No. He won't be in today," paused, and reached for a pencil. She jotted down a telephone number, then said, "I'll have him call you tomorrow or next day," and cradled the receiver.

There was a strong overhead light, and Shayne saw that she had the clean fresh coloring of a buxom farm girl. He was much closer to her here in the smaller room, and when she turned to face him, his mouth spread in a slow grin.

Her eyes widened and the pleasant expression on her face changed slowly to one of dismay and then to fear or anger, or both. She drew in a sharp breath and exclaimed, "I know now who you are! I've seen your pictures in the paper. You're that private dick, Mike Shayne. Get out! Haven't you caused Jack enough trouble already?"

"Not half as much as I'm going to cause," Shayne told her grimly, "if you don't tell me where he is."

"I don't know." Her eyes blazed with angry defiance. "And I wouldn't tell you if I did."

"You're making a mistake," he said gravely. "Don't you know he's mixed up in a murder?"

"If he is, you got him into it, damn your soul to hell! Get out!"

Shayne said mildly, "All right. But tell your boss the longer he hides out the worse it'll be for him." He turned, went down the hallway to the studio and across it in firm strides that echoed loudly. The bell tinkled when he opened the door and he marked time for a couple of steps, then closed the door quietly. He waited a moment, listening, before tiptoeing back through the studio.

He reached the office doorway just as the blonde seated herself at the

desk with her back to him and lifted the telephone. Watching over her shoulder, Shayne memorized the number she dialed.

After a moment she said sharply, "Three-one-nine, please." Her breathing was audible, and beads of perspiration stood on her plump neck.

"But I know he must be in," she said impatiently. "Ring him again, please."

Then, as though a sixth sense warned her, she turned her head and glanced toward the door. Her eyes rounded and her mouth sagged open when she stared up into Shayne's face. She slammed the phone down and sprang up with her hands clawed.

Shayne beat a strategic retreat, and reached the outer door in a few long strides. He hurried to a public telephone sign on the corner, went in, and dialed the number the "big blonde" had dialed.

A voice said, "Hotel Trainton. Good morning."

Shayne hung up and went out to riffle through the telephone directory. The Trainton Hotel was in the southwest section of the city. He trotted out to his car.

TWENTY minutes later he entered the gloomy, unprepossessing lobby of the Trainton and went to the desk where an elderly man in shirt sleeves was leaning on the counter chewing tobacco.

"A friend of mine checked in early this morning. Three-one-nine, I think he said. Is he in now?"

The clerk shook his grizzled head. "Just had a phone call for him. He didn't answer."

"You see him go out?"

"Didn't notice. Took his key, if he did."

Shayne said brusquely, "I'm afraid there's trouble. Get a duplicate key and let's go up."

The old man shifted his wad of tobacco and continued to lean on the counter. "You the cops?"

"Private." Shayne took out his wallet, showed his card and extracted a ten-dollar bill. "Let's get going."

The bill disappeared and the clerk plucked a key from a box behind him. A bellboy was dozing on a bench near the desk. The clerk nudged him awake as he went by and said, "Watch the desk a minute, Ned," then led the way to the single elevator where a slender girl in uniform coaxed the shaky lift to the third floor without mishap.

Shayne followed him down a musty, dimly-lit hall to a door on the left. After a perfunctory knock he inserted the key and eased the door open. The shade was drawn at the single window and the room was quite dark. The clerk switched on an overhead light, grunted, and stepped back with a gesture for Shayne to look inside.

Clad only in a pair of shorts, the occupant of the room lay sprawled face downward on the bed, and there was a strong odor of whisky in the tightly closed room.

"Reckon he's dead?" the old man asked impassively.

Shayne brushed past him to the bed. He touched the man's bare shoulders and finding the flesh warm flopped him over on his back, and stood looking down at a thin, sallow face sprouted with sparse whiskers, wide-open mouth and closed eyes.

"Dead drunk," Shayne told the clerk shortly. "Thanks. I'll take care of him."

"Well, I do declare," the old man said. "So that's how come he didn't answer."

Shayne caught his arm, propelled him to the door, closed and locked it after him, then turned to look swiftly around the room. A corked fifth of cheap whisky, about one-fourth full, lay on the floor beside a pair of shoes and socks; a brown suit and white shirt were piled on a chair.

When he lifted the coat to examine it he saw the flash camera in a leather case. He found a shabby billfold in the inner coat pocket. It contained John P. Ludlow's business card; he didn't look further. He went to the window and raised the shade to the top, opened the window as wide as it would go, then stalked into the bathroom and turned cold water into the tub.

Returning to the bed, he leaned over and shook Ludlow vigorously, but all he got was a slobbery mumble. The eyes stayed shut and the body limp.

He stepped back and surveyed tbe photographer with a frown of disgust. The man was thin to the point of scrawniness, with sharp elbows and big-boned wrists, lean shanks, knobby knees and splayed feet. Cords stood out on either side of his sunken throat, and his open mouth showed yellowed teeth with two lowers missing in front.

Shayne lit a cigarette and went to the bathroom door to watch the level of water slowly rise in the tub. When it was half full he returned to the bed, lifted the limp figure in his arms, carried him into the bathroom and dumped him into the tub.

Ludlow thrashed and shivered in the cold water. His eyes came open and he stared about wildly, mumbling curses and trying to grab the edge of the tub to pull himself up.

Shayne shoved him back each time he tried to get out, and finally held him down until his lips began to turn blue. Then he caught Ludlow's arm and lifted him to his feet, helped the shaking man to remove his sodden shorts, steadied him when he stepped onto the bathmat, handed him a towel and said curtly, "Rub yourself down with this."

In the bedroom Shayne retrieved the whisky bottle and a glass that had rolled under the bed, poured a good two inches of liquor into the glass and returned to the bathroom. The photographer was sitting on the toilet seat with his head lolling back against the tank.

"Snap out of it!" Shayne demanded sharply. "Here, drink this if you think you can hold it down."

Ludlow looked up with teeth chattering and tears streaming down his cheeks. He tried to take the glass, but his hands trembled too violently to hold it. Shayne put an arm around his shoulder, pressed the glass to his lips and ordered, "Swallow."

Ludlow gulped down half the whisky, shuddered and sputtered, "God! It's horrible!"

"Finish it." He held one hand at the back of Ludlow's head and pressed the glass against his lips again. The photographer swallowed mechanically. His trembling gradually subsided and color came into his face.

Hauling him roughly to his feet, Shayne took a towel and began rubbing his body vigorously, pummeling any fleshy spot he could find with his fingers, and wondering how in the name of God a buxom blonde could fall for a guy like this.

When Ludlow started bowling with pain from the redhead's rough treatment, Shayne shoved him into the bedroom and onto tbe bed, pulled the sheet over him and growled, "Stay there and relax. When you're over the shakes we'll talk."

THE photographer blinked watery eyes at him and said, "You're Mike Shayne," in a feeble, fearful voice. "What's happened? What went wrong last night?" His teeth started chattering again.

Shayne poured the rest of the whisky in the glass and held it out to Ludlow who shuddered and said, "God, no!"—then dragged himself to a sitting position, took the glass and drained it. After a period of gagging and screwing his face in a grimace of distaste, he asked, "How did you find me here? What you want with me now?"

"I want some information." Shayne tossed the other man's clothes onto the foot of the bed and sat down on the chair. "How did you recognize me just now?"

"Saw your picture in the papers often enough. I tried to phone you last night after I found Carrol dead. Somebody answered your phone that didn't sound like you."

"Start back at the beginning," Shayne ordered. "The whole Carrol deal. I should explain that I never even heard of Carrol until after he was dead."

"Hold on," Ludlow protested. "When you called me yesterday—"

"I didn't call you," Shayne cut in sharply. "But I gather that somebody did who claimed to be me."

"Sure. Said it was Mike Shayne calling and he had a job for last night." He paused, squinted at the redhead, asked, "Is this straight—it wasn't you?"

"No. That's why I want to know all about it. From the beginning. Don't leave anything out."

"There isn't much," Ludlow mumbled. "I thought it was you, naturally. I didn't ask any questions. He said there was fifty bucks in it for one picture, a bedroom picture in the dark, so I figured a divorce set-up. Number 216 at that hotel, he said, at exactly two-twenty in the morning. The door to the sitting-room was to be open and I was to walk in, go straight back to the bedroom, as quiet as possible, get my shot and beat it."

"Wait a minute," Shayne interjected. "Are you positive of the apartment number? *Two*-sixteen? Could it have been *one*-sixteen, and you made a mistake?"

"Not a chance. I can't afford to make mistakes in my business. I wrote down the number and repeated it back to you—I mean, to him.

"It was exactly two-twenty when I went in. Couldn't hear a sound from the bedroom, but that wasn't any of my business. I figured maybe they was busy, you know. So I went to the doorway and set off my flash. My God! I was scared stiff when I saw him in the flash. Alone, and dead, and blood all over!

"I beat it fast. All I could think about was staying in the clear by phoning the police. Then if they did find out, they couldn't say I covered up. Later, I got to thinking, and tried to call you at a number I got from Information. Somebody answered and said it was you, but the voice didn't sound right. I thought it was the cops and hung up." He paused and regarded Shayne with puzzled eyes. "Say, it *was* you that time! It was your voice."

"That's right. You mean my voice sounded different from the one who first called you? How was it different?"

"I dunno," he said, his bloodshot eyes reflective. "Sort of heavier, yours was. Not so much rasp in it. Anyhow, I got scared and hung up and thought maybe I'd better hide out. So I checked in here. If it wasn't you that called me yesterday, then who was it?"

"That," said Shayne with a frown, "is one of half a dozen sixty-four-dollar questions. Where were you to deliver your picture?"

"To a lawyer in Wilmington, Delaware."

"Bates?"

"That's it. Bates. He said the lawyer would pay me for the job. Most jobs like that I'd want cash before doing it, but knowing Mike Shayne's reputation I wasn't worried. You know who killed Carrol?"

"I don't know a single thing about it," Shayne growled. He stood up and looked at his watch. It was noon. "Here's what you'd better do," he continued after a moment's thought:

"Relax for awhile and get rid of that hangover, then go straight to Police Headquarters; take along your camera and the picture you got last night. See Will Gentry, the chief, and tell him exactly what you told me. Leave out the part about phoning me last night and about this talk we've had. Just tell him you got frightened and holed up with a quart of whisky and passed out. As soon as you woke up sober, you realized it was best to go to the police and get it off your chest. He'll ask you if you can recognize my voice over the phone and stuff like that, and if he makes a test I hope you'll tell him the other voice was different. Okay?"

"Okay," said Ludlow weakly. "Say, how did you find me here?"

"Don't blame your blonde at the studio," Shayne told him pleasantly. "She did her best to cover up for you. I outsmarted her, that's all."

Ludlow sighed and lay back on the pillow, and Mike Shayne went out, leaving him staring up at the grimy ceiling.



Wearing only a pair of shorts, the occupant of the room lay sprawled face downward on the bed, and there was a strong odor of whisky. "Reckon he's dead?" the old man asked.

Chapter Eleven

CHIEF WILL GENTRY was seated alone in a rear booth of a small restaurant a block from Police Headquarters when Shayne entered a short time later. He looked up from a cup of jellied beef broth and frowned as the redhead slid into the seat opposite him.

"Doc Meeker tells me you dodged out on having that head wound examined, Mike," Gentry rumbled.

Shayne picked up the menu the chief had laid aside. He said, "I had

a hot lead that had to be followed up fast. I did leave my car in the lot for you."

"What was the lead?" Gentry demanded.

"Margrave. Ralph Carrol's business partner."

"Oh? Trying to sic you onto the Vulcan angle, eh?" Gentry asked with distaste and disinterest.

"Yeh," Shayne muttered, running his eye over the menu. He beckoned the waiter, ordered lamb stew and coffee, then continued to Gentry, "Did you talk to Margrave?"

"He called me early this morning and talked a blue streak about soulless corporations who keep an army of gunmen on the payroll to wipe out small competitors. I sent Lieutenant Hanson over to see him, but it sounds like hogwash to me. You go for it?"

"He made out a fair case," said Shayne reflectively. "But I'd check Margrave's alibi carefully if I were you."

The waiter brought a plate of cold cuts and a bottle of beer and set them before Gentry. "We'll check, all right," he told Shayne. "What still bothers me is the crazy hook-up with *you* last night. The woman being given the key to your room by mistake or design, and Bates' insistence that you were working for him. Tied up with your flat denial, and the removal of Bates' correspondence with you from his files. What in hell does it add up to, Mike?"

"I'm beginning to swing around to the belief that somehow or other, Mrs. Carrol and Bates are telling the truth as far as they know it. I'm almost certain they believed they were dealing with me."

"A while ago you were working hard to prove it would have been impossible for anyone to impersonate you," Gentry reminded him, "even to an out-of-town client."

"Yeh," Shayne muttered absently. "I still don't see how it was worked. But the first contact would have been the most difficult and the important one. Look at it this way. Suppose somebody finds out that Bates wants to hire a private detective in Miami for a job, and that he is inclined toward me. Suppose this man simply has a letterhead printed something like mine, gives his own address instead of mine, and writes Bates a letter saying he's heard about the job and is willing to take it on. Bates would naturally reply to the printed address and I would never know a damned thing about it."

"A pretty elaborate hoax just to collect a small fee," said the chief.

"I agree. But don't forget that the set-up actually culminated in murder."

"You mean it was planned that way in the beginning?" rumbled Gentry.

"I don't know a single thing more that you do." Shayne spread out his big hands. "Carrol was murdered at just about the time his wife was supposed to be with him. The only reason she didn't discover his body was that she had been sent to my room instead of his."

The waiter came with Shayne's order, and after he went away Gentry asked, "So you think it was pure accident that she had the wrong key? A lucky one for her, if the murderer knew of the arrangement and planned his kill in a manner to implicate her."

Shayne spooned a portion of stew onto his plate, and took a mouthful, "I just don't know what to think," he confessed. "I don't believe it was pure coincidence that Carrol was murdered just a few minutes before she was slated to slip into his bed. *Somebody* evidently had the right key. I understand Carrol was murdered in his bed. That doesn't sound as though he got up to let his killer in. So there must have been two keys floating around last night—one to my room and another to Carrol's." He buttered a hard roll, took a bite, and chewed ruminatively.

"Who was in a position to pull the impersonation of you?"

Shayne shrugged. "Margrave, for one. He must have been aware that Mrs. Carrol was arranging with Bates to hire me to locate her husband. Being Carrol's partner, he probably knew where Carrol was all the time. Margrave was on the ground and it looks as though he might have had a motive."

"Maybe you've got something there, Mike. But what about the man who got you on the bay-front and tried to kill you? That wasn't Margrave. You saw him."

"It certainly wasn't Margrave," Shayne agreed. "But he could have hired somebody for that while he was stealing the letter back from Mrs. Carrol's hotel-room and then flying up to Wilmington to steal the rest of the fake letters from Bates' office so there'd be no way of tracing them to him."

"Sounds complicated as hell," Will Gentry growled, "but I'll check with the airlines to see if he did make such a trip."

"He wouldn't have used his own name. Much more likely, just to complicate matters further, he'd have bought a ticket in my name."

Gentry laid his knife and fork on his empty plate and said sourly, "I guess that's out. I checked this morning with the only line flying a schedule that would fit, and they haven't reported back yet."

Shayne avoided the chief's gaze when he asked casually, "What results did your boys get on my car? You willing to accept my story about being creased by a bullet and staying knocked out for five hours?"

"I'll accept it," said Gentry, "unless further evidence turns up to disprove it. They didn't get any fingerprints, but everything else reads the way you told it. If you did arrange the bullet-hole and the blood on the cushion, it was a pretty damned elaborate set-up, and I don't know when you had time to do it and get up to Wilmington and back."

"Thanks," said Shayne gravely. "Then I guess you won't throw me in jail if I tell you that a man using my name *did* fly to Wilmington and back early this morning. The airline called my office right after you'd left," he explained swiftly, changing the facts a little to soften what he had done. "You'd left my number for them to call, you know, and the clerk thought it was you on the phone and gave me the report before I realized what it was. A man who said he was Michael Shayne flew to Wilmington at four-twenty and returned at nineten—giving him just about enough time in Wilmington to burglarize Bates' office and get back."

"Damn it, Mike!" Gentry exploded. "You didn't tell me—"

"Hold it a minute, Will. The thing was dumped into my lap without my asking for it, and you know the mood you were in. You would have had to arrest me while you investigated further. And I had had the call from Margrave that sounded like an important lead. But I'm giving it to you for what it is worth now."

"Margrave," rumbled Gentry. "He fits like a glove. He'd be familiar with Bates' office; probably knew just where his files are kept."

"Right. And if you can get hold of the employee who sold the plane ticket, and the hostesses who flew up and back—if any of them can identify Margrave, we'll have a case."

"But there's still one thing that doesn't make sense," Gentry protested. "If Margrave had been impersonating you, aren't you the last person in the world he'd call in to work on the case? He'd stay as far away from you as possible."

"It wouldn't be the first time a murderer called me in on a case," Shayne pointed out.

"We damn sure have some questions to ask him," said Gentry firmly. "And right now I'd better get back to my office. Bates is due to fly in from Wilmington about now."

"That's one session I want to sit in on." Shayne hastily finished his lunch, and they went out together.

At Headquarters the chief stopped at Homicide to order an immediate and thorough investigation of Margrave, with particular emphasis on his movements since the preceding midnight. From there they went to Gentry's office, where they found a visitor waiting for them, accompanied by Patrolman Hagen who had been detailed to meet him at the airport.

ATTORNEY BATES was a man of medium-size, middle-aged and precise. He offered a cold, limp hand in turn to Chief Gentry and Michael Shayne, studying the redhead with disapproval.

"So you are the so-called private detective," Bates observed icily, "who now denies having had any part in this affair. Also, either intentionally or through stupidity, you furnished Mrs. Carrol with a key to your apartment instead of her husband's and lured her there at midnight under false pretenses. At about the same time, it appears, someone was murdering Ralph Carrol."

The chief sat down and started to speak, but Shayne broke in swiftly, "Most important is this—when and how do you claim you first contacted me to take on the job of locating Ralph Carrol in Miami?"

The lawyer frowned and said, "It was about two weeks ago when I first wrote. I do not have the precise date because my office was burglarized early this morning and all the pertinent correspondence removed. Perhaps you know more about that than I do, though."

"We've only your word for it," Shayne reminded him. "It's the sort of lie you would tell if asked to produce proof that was nonexistent. Is there anyone else who can testify to such correspondence?"

"Is this fellow accusing me?" Bates demanded of Gentry. "I assure you that I have no intention—"

"We want facts, not speeches," Shayne cut him off angrily. "You claim you wrote me a letter two weeks ago suggesting that I fix a frame to put Carrol's wife into her husband's bedroom. How was that letter addressed?"

"I protest your phrasing," said Bates curtly. "I suggested no frame-up. I merely asked if you were capable of arranging a certain matter for my client. There was no illegality involved."

"Just who was your client?" Shayne demanded. "I understand you act as attorney for Carrol and Margrave, yet you admit conniving with Carrol's wife to put her husband on the spot. Even to the extent, as you said over the telephone, of persuading Carrol to take an apartment at a certain hotel where your man in Miami wanted him. How do you justify that?"

"I do not feel the need of justifying myself to you," said Bates in a voice of outraged dignity. "Perhaps you'll explain your eagerness to have Ralph Carrol in your hotel, in the light of what happened later, and why you deliberately lured Mrs. Carrol to your bedroom. I telephoned her just before taking the plane here this morning, and she told me of that outrageous attempt at—"

"Let's skip that right now. Tell me how your first letter to me was addressed."

"To your office, of course. You replied promptly on your own letterhead, as I am positive you are fully aware."

Shayne shrugged and turned to Gentry. "There goes the only idea I had for the way it was worked." He reverted to Margrave.

"Do you know that Margrave and Nora Carrol were quite friendly before she married Carrol?" he asked.

> Minds of moderate caliber ordinarily condemn everything which is beyond their range.
>
> —LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

"I know they were acquainted. It was common knowledge."

"*Intimately* acquainted?" Shayne persisted.

"Really, sir," the lawyer protested in a shocked tone. "This is not a matter I care to discuss further."

"Why not?"

"I do not see that it can have any possible bearing on Ralph Carrol's death."

"From where I sit," said Shayne patiently, "it looks as though it might be very important. There were anonymous letters, I believe, accusing Mrs. Carrol of having been intimate with Carrol's partner."

Bates clamped his lips together and did not reply.

"Who wrote those letters?" Shayne demanded.

"Authorship was not established. They were definitely scurrilous and not worthy of attention."

"But they led indirectly to the divorce Carrol was contemplating when he was killed."

"I'm not sure I understand what you mean," Bates parried.

"Mrs. Carrol admitted it herself last night," Shayne told him. "She said her husband became suspicious of her after receiving the letters, and began watching her. This made her angry and drove her to drink too much on a certain week-end party and commit an indiscretion with a certain Ted Granger—which Carrol was using as evidence to divorce her without alimony. Isn't that true?"

"It is true that Carrol was basing his divorce action on her affair with young Granger," said Bates cautiously. "How much the anonymous letters contributed to that affair is anyone's question. Ted has been quite gentlemanly about the unfortunate episode and openly admitted everything that happened was entirely his fault. He has publicly stated his desire and his determination to marry Nora Carrol if and when the divorce was granted."

"And she was just as determined to hang on to Carrol," Shayne stated. "How many people knew of her plan to come down here and compromise her husband by getting into his bedroom?"

"I'm sure I don't know. It hardly seems a subject she would discuss with many people." The Wilmington lawyer's tone was sharp with disgust.

"Margrave?" the redhead demanded.

"I would think not."

"Are you certain Margrave didn't know you planned to retain Michael Shayne for the scheme?"

"I can't say I'm certain. It would be a complete surprise, however, to learn that Mr. Margrave knew anything about it."

"How about Ted Granger?" Shayne probed.

Attorney Bates hesitated, glaring at the redhead with cold, angry eyes. "Any conjecture I might make on that score would not be evidence."

"You're not on the witness stand," Shayne said. "Have you reason to think she confided in Granger?"

Bates shifted his position slightly, then said, "From my slight knowledge of the—ah—alleged scandal, I would say there is a possibility she did. Granger flew down with me from Wilmington. He seemed unduly worried that the police might try to involve Nora in her husband's death; and this might be due to the fact that he knew she had planned to attempt a reconciliation last night."

SHAYNE had been standing over the lawyer. He sat down abruptly and said, "Perhaps it doesn't matter," wearily. "But right now I'm going along with the theory that Carrol was killed by someone who knew exactly what Nora planned to do. The motive was probably to prevent the reconciliation taking place, and quite possibly the timing was arranged to put Nora on the spot and frame her for the murder."

"And I suggest that such a theory is absurdly fantastic," said Bates with tight-lipped decision.

"Can you give us a better one? From everything I've heard, Ted Granger was infatuated enough to give him a good motive for wanting to block the reconciliation."

"But not to the point of committing murder."

"No one ever knows," Shayne told him gravely, "when that point is reached."

"But Granger had no opportunity," Bates objected. "He was in Wilmington."

"When?"

"Last night. I've just told you he flew down with me."

"A two-hour flight," said Shayne. "He could easily have been in Miami last night, and flown back to establish an alibi."

Bates shook his head slowly and almost smiled. "Not Ted. It's not in his character."

"But with Carrol dead and Nora legally a widow, he comes dashing down here to comfort her. You can't deny that."

"I'm not attempting to. Let me point out that your case against Granger falls to pieces because of one insurmountable contradiction. In the first place you hypothecate that he killed Nora's husband for love of her. Yet at the same time, you suggest he chose a time and method that was bound to involve her, and quite possibly bring an accusation against her —against the woman he loves and hopes to marry," Bates elaborated. "You can't have it both ways, Mr. Shayne." Again a half-smile was on his thin lips.

"All right." Shayne turned to Chief Gentry. "I can't think of anything else, Will. But if I were you I'd check with Wilmington to determine whether Granger actually spent the night there."

"If you're finished with your questions," Bates said, "may I ask a few of my own?" He turned to the chief.

"Go ahead." Gentry rumbled.

"Do you actually accept this man's denial that he was retained by me to locate Ralph Carrol?" the lawyer demanded sharply, "and to arrange for his wife to visit him last night?"

Will Gentry answered with a blunt, "Yes."

"Do you believe me to be lying about the matter?"

Gentry hesitated and glanced doubtfully at Shayne. "I don't go that far. I don't believe Shayne does either. I think you were taken in by an impostor and that you thought you were dealing with Shayne, but that it was someone else altogether."

"How do you explain such a hoax? I had letters from him and telephone calls."

"We're guessing," Shayne interjected, "that your first letter to me was intercepted somehow. That the person who got hold of it had a letterhead printed, using his own address and telephone number instead of mine. Naturally, you would have no reason to suspect you weren't dealing with me."

"How could my letter have been intercepted?" Bates asked with incredulity, his pale eyes shifting from Shayne to Gentry.

"I won't even try to answer that," Shayne growled. "The most likely place, I should think, is in Wilmington, before it ever reached the mail. In your own office, perhaps. Could your secretary have been careless and showed it to someone?"

"Certainly not. It's quite impossible. Miss Evans is completely trustworthy."

"Perhaps she gave it to someone to mail for her," Shayne suggested casually. "Think back over the routine in your office. You dictated the letter, no doubt, and she typed it. It was probably given to you for signing. There were doubtless clients in and out of your office while this was going on. When did Margrave come to Miami?" he threw at the lawyer abruptly.

"Why, a week or so ago. Certainly you don't suspect—"

"*Someone* got hold of that letter and prevented its reaching me—someone who was able to write you on forged stationery a day or so later from Miami. Someone," he went on harshly, "who supplied Mrs. Carrol with a key to my apartment instead of to Carrol's, and sent her to *my* room just about the time her husband was being murdered on the floor above."

"Why?" demanded Bates in bewilderment.

"When we know why," Shayne told him, "we'll probably know who."

Gentry's telephone rang. He answered it, listened a moment, then said, "You'd better pick him up and bring him in for questioning on suspicion," and hung up.

In answer to Shayne's unspoken question, he said, "That was a report on your friend at the Roney. He claims he was in bed asleep early last night, but no one can verify it. I'll get after the airlines and see if I can get witnesses up here."

"And check on a later flight," said Shayne. "Anything after four-thirty that stops in Wilmington. Maybe you can put it closer," he added to Bates.

"*How* CITIFIED *are you?*"

Fill in the proper interpretation of the clue in each case below, and you'll have the name of a well-known U. S. city. For instance: *(Metal container)* . . . *ton (CANTON).*

Get 17 or more correct and you're downtown; 13 to 16 puts you in the outskirts, while 12 or less means the sticks!

1. (Eccentric wheel) . . . den	11. (Prosthetic device) . . . . . . port
2. (First gear) . . . ell	12. (The Orient) . . . . Orange
3. (Scotch cap) . . . pa	13. (A leap) . . . . . . field
4. (A tree) . . . land	14. (A blush) . . . . . ing
5. (Wandering worker) . . . . ken	15. (Small valley) . . . . dale
6. (Left side) . . . . land	16. (Collapse) . . . . River
7. (Father) . . . . . son	17. (H_2O) . . . . . bury
8. (Swain) . . . . mont	18. (Compass point) . . . . . Bend
9. (Indian tribe) . . . . . City	19. (Period of light) . . . ton
10. (Monday's chore) . . . . ton	20. (Male red deer) . . . . ford

Answers:

(1) Camden; (2) Lowell; (3) Tampa; (4) Oakland; (5) Hoboken; (6) Portland; (7) Paterson; (8) Beaumont; (9) Sioux City; (10) Washington; (11 Bridgeport; (12) East Orange; (13) Springfield; (14) Flushing; (15) Glendale; (16) Fall River; (17) Waterbury; (18) South Bend; (19) Dayton; (20) Hartford

"Did Granger contact you this morning?"

"Yes. He phoned about ten, after hearing the news about Ralph. When I told him I was flying down, he invited himself to join me."

"Any flight between four-thirty and eight, then," Shayne told Gentry, then stood up and started for the door.

"Where you headed, Mike?" Gentry asked.

"To have a talk with the widow and her boy-friend from Wilmington."

Chapter Twelve

A vagrant idea was nagging at the back of Shayne's mind. He didn't know exactly what it was or what he hoped it might prove, but it was a point that had subconsciously bothered him ever since early in the morning when he and Gentry had talked by telephone to Bates in Wilmington.

Upon reaching his car he got in and sat for a moment before starting the motor. In the rush of events since Carrol's murder, he hadn't had an opportunity to check at his hotel, so instead of driving directly to the Commodore, he stopped off at his hotel.

The clerk on the desk had known the rangy detective for years and greeted him affably. "Bad business last night, Mr. Shayne! Anything new on the Carrol murder?" His eyes flicked up to the wound on Shayne's head and a smile of admiration was forming on his lips when the redhead snapped in mock anger:

"Hell of a thing for Dick to be sick last night when it happened! The man you had on the switchboard didn't even warn me I was trying to call a stiff, when I asked for Carrol."

"We're all sorry about that, Mr. Shayne," the clerk told him soberly. "And that's something I've been wanting to see you about in private. Dick called up an hour or so ago and told me to tell you he tried to call you at your office about ten o'clock this morning, but no one answered."

Shayne's memory flashed back to the call he had been prevented from taking by the interference of one of Gentry's men, the burly, surly Gene Benton. He asked, "What did Dick have on his mind?"

"Something that worried him when he heard about Mr. Carrol's being murdered. It's about your man casing Mr. Carrol's apartment last week."

Only a muscle twitching in his left cheek gave an indication of Shayne's intense interest. This was it—this was what had been nagging at him! He said quietly:

"My man? I thought all of you knew I work alone."

"Dick didn't give me too much on the phone," the clerk said apologetically, "but that's what he said. You did have an assistant a couple of months ago, though. Remember? You brought him in and introduced him around and said he was to use your room any time he wanted."

Shayne's eyes were very bright, but he said, "Yeh—Nash," casually. "For a couple of weeks in January. He was around last week asking about Ralph Carrol?"

"Dick didn't say it was him. Just said he was your man. Course we all know you always worked by yourself, but I recollect you did have this man that one time—"

"I remember," Shayne cut in impatiently. "What's Dick's home number?"

"Oh, you can't get him there now, Mr. Shayne. He was taken to the hospital for an operation at noon. He just wanted me to tell you he hadn't spilled it and wouldn't unless you said to."

Shayne took out his wallet and laid a ten-dollar bill on the desk. He said, "Thanks. Send Dick some flowers." He hurried out and headed for Nora Carrol's hotel.

He stopped at the desk in the Commodore and asked for Mrs. Carrol's room number. The clerk gave him the information and Shayne trotted to the row of phones, lifted one and said, "Room 360."

Nora Carrol answered immediately.

"Mike Shayne downstairs. I'll be right up." He hung up before she could protest, and stalked to the elevator. He was on the third floor within a minute of his call. Thirty seconds later he stopped in front of Number 360 and rapped.

Through the closed door he heard movement inside and the blurred murmur of voices. He rapped again, hard and insistent.

A shrill cry, "No, Ted! My God, *no!*" Nora Carrol's shrill cry of panic was followed by a blast of gunfire beyond the door.

Shayne hastily tried the knob, then drew back across the corridor ready to lunge at the door with his left shoulder just as the door flew open.

Nora Carrol stood inside, her hair disheveled and her face contorted with fear and horror. Tears streamed down her cheeks. The acrid smell of gun smoke drifted up from the muzzle of a .45 automatic on the floor, and just beyond the gun a man's body lay crumpled on its side.

"I tried to stop him! I tried to!" She sobbed the words over and over. "But he went crazy all at once."

Shayne put an arm around her and looked somberly down at the body of the man who some nine hours earlier had tried to kill him in the front seat of his car. Blood gushed from a hole at the base of the man's throat just beneath his chin.

Heeling the door shut, Shayne half-carried and half-dragged Nora to the bed, let her down gently and said, "Cry it out while I call the police. But first tell me one thing. Is it Ted Granger?"

"Yes. He—he—" Her voice choked and she turned on her side, covered her face with both hands and sobbed wildly.

Shayne picked up the telephone on the bedside table, asked for an outside line and gave Will Gentry's private number at Police Headquarters. When the chief answered, he said, "Shayne, Will. I'm with Mrs. Carrol in three-sixty at the Commodore and Ted Granger is lying here on the floor —dead."

He listened a moment, then said impatiently, "It looks that way. I'll try to calm Mrs. Carrol down. Better bring Bates along if he's still around."

He hung up, and turned slowly to make a careful survey of the room.

The dead man was in his shirt sleeves. His hat and jacket lay on a chair near the door. Everything was neat and tidy, and there was no indication of a struggle.

Shayne lit a cigarette, walked around to the other side of the bed from where Nora lay, and sat down. He studied her moodily, listening to her choking sobs as he took long drags on his cigarette, remembering the first time he had seen her, completely nude and outlined in the faint light from the open door of his apartment as she moved toward it to close it firmly on the night-latch before getting into his bed.

Suddenly he caught her shaking shoulder in a firm grasp and said curtly, "That's about enough histrionics. So the guy is dead, and that makes two of your men rubbed out in twelve hours. But there's still Margrave left."

Her sobbing subsided slowly, and for a moment she lay still. Then she lifted herself on one elbow, glared at him and said, "What do you mean by that crack?"

"Don't forget that Margrave has the invention now," he said cynically. "That's why you switched from him to Ralph in the first place, isn't it?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"I think you do."

Nora Carrol was suddenly stricken again, and tears flowed down her cheeks. "How can you say things like that," she sobbed, "when Ted is l-lying there on the f-floor?"

Shayne said pleasantly, "Skip it if you like. It really doesn't matter now, I guess."

At the sound of footsteps hurrying down the hall he got up and went to

the door to admit Will Gentry and Attorney Bates. Officers from the Homicide squad, a worried hotel manager and curious guests pressed in behind him.

"Come in with your notebook, Jervis," Gentry said to a young officer. "Rest of you stay out until I call you."

He closed the door, looked at Granger's body, then at Shayne with lifted brows, and finally at the bed where Bates sat beside Mrs. Carrol, holding both of her hands in his.

Officer Jervis sat at a table across the room with notebook and pencil ready. "Take this down," the chief ordered: 'Statement from Michael Shayne.'" He turned to the redhead and waited.

"I came here straight from your office. Called Mrs. Carrol from the desk and said I was on my way up. I knocked on her door and heard voices and some sort of movement, then Mrs. Carrol screamed, 'No, Ted. My God, no.'" Shayne's utter lack of inflection on the words gave them a dramatic impact that no emphasis could possibly have done.

"This was instantly followed by one shot inside the room. I was all ready to hit the door with my shoulder, but Mrs. Carrol jerked it open from inside. She was sobbing and hysterical, and this is what I saw." He gestured toward the dead man and the gun. "A dead man with a gun lying beside him. She told me it was Ted Granger and that she had tried to stop him, but he had suddenly gone crazy. I phoned you and haven't touched anything except the telephone."

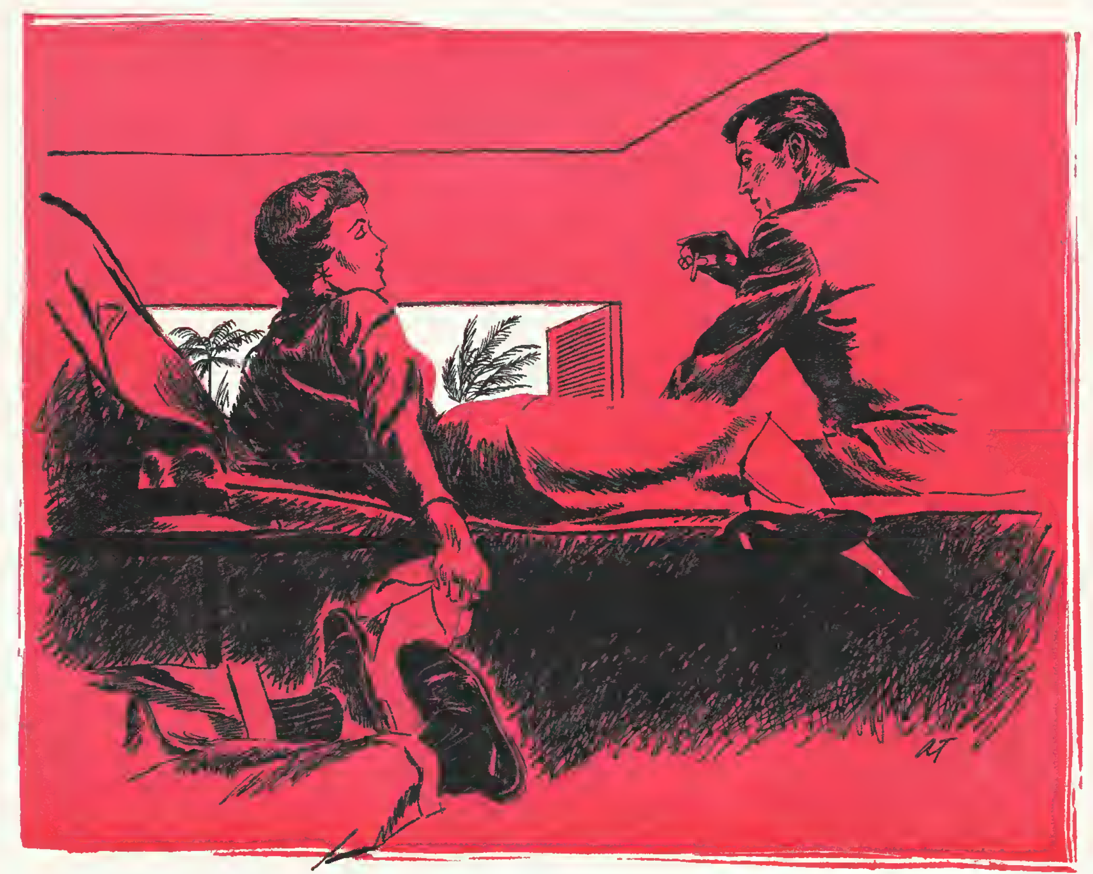
He paused, then added, "There's one thing more you should know right now. Granger is the man who called me on the telephone a little before four o'clock and offered me ten grand to keep quiet about Mrs. Carrol. He is the man who shot me as I parked my car on the bay-front and left me for dead. It's a fair guess that the gun on the floor is the same one he used on me."

Will Gentry nodded gravely. "The hole in the roof of your car came from a .45 slug. We found an ejected cartridge on the floor." He turned to Nora and said, "Your turn now, Mrs. Carrol. Start at the beginning and tell us everything you know about this."

She was sitting tensely erect beside Bates, her face strained and white, but completely in control of herself when she began in a low voice: "I was surprised when Ted came about half an hour ago. I thought he was still in Wilmington. He had called me from there early this morning, you see. He was worried about something and begged me not to tell he was in Miami last night. He swore that he had nothing to do with Ralph's death. I didn't exactly promise him, but I did say I wouldn't tell unless I had to." She paused, moistened her lips, and hesitated.

"Then he showed up here about half an hour ago," Gentry prompted her.

"Yes. He begged me again to promise I wouldn't give him away. I said I would unless he told me why, and



"That's enough histrionics," Shayne said gruffly. "The guy is dead. That makes two of your men rubbed out in twelve hours. But there's still Margrave left." Nora's sobbing subsided immediately and she raised herself on one elbow. "Just what do you mean by that?" she demanded.

then he blurted out that he had killed a man in Miami early this morning and flown back to Wilmington and fixed an alibi that would stand up if I didn't ruin it for him.

"I was horrified at first because I thought he meant he had killed Ralph, but he swore he hadn't done that. He said he was frightened when he heard about Ralph and was afraid I had done it, and so he had killed you to protect me." She looked directly at Shayne as she spoke.

"I was terribly confused and didn't know what to think. I hadn't heard you were dead. Of course, I hadn't seen you since—there at the hotel—and I didn't know for sure what might have happened. And then there were the *two* of you, you know. You saying it *wasn't* you who'd been working for Mr. Bates—and all that. So I just didn't know. Well, Ted went all to pieces and about that time you called from downstairs and said you were coming up. As soon as I hung up I said to Ted:

" 'You didn't kill Michael Shayne. That was he on the phone and he'll be up here in a minute.' Ted went completely crazy. He raved at me for turning against him, and said he had killed Ralph for my sake and now it was all over and he was going to kill himself. He got that pistol from inside his shirt and waved it around. I tried to stop him and just then you knocked and he jerked away from me and—and did it. I never— I just can't believe it of Ted," she ended brokenly. "I never suspected him for a moment. I still can't really believe he killed Ralph." She leaned against the Wilmington lawyer and began sobbing afresh.

"He did his best to kill me," Shayne said grimly. "Did he say anything about how or why he killed your husband?"

"There wasn't time. It all happened so fast. Just while you were on your way up."

"You knew all the time he was here in Miami last night," growled Gentry. "Didn't you suspect him?"

"No, I didn't," she cried vehemently. "I just didn't think Ted could kill anyone."

"He knew you were supposed to see your husband?" Shayne charged.

"Yes. I told him yesterday afternoon right here in this room after he trailed me from Wilmington. He was begging me to let Ralph go ahead and get the divorce so I could marry him, and I told him flatly that I loved Ralph and didn't intend to give him up."

"You didn't happen to give him the key to your husband's room?" asked Shayne cynically, "and then get a duplicate of my key so you could pretend there was a mistake and put yourself in the clear on whatever happened to your husband?"

"I certainly did not. I don't know why I was given the wrong key—unless you did it yourself," she ended with unexpected spirit.

"How do you suppose Granger found out where your husband was?"

"I don't know. I may have told him the name of Ralph's hotel, but I don't think so."

"But not the room number," Shayne suggested. "Not *one*-sixteen instead of *two*-sixteen?"

"No. I'm certain I didn't give him the number. Just the name of the hotel. I was so angry with him for following me down here—"

"That might begin to add up to something," Shayne cut in, turning to Gentry. "If Granger went away from here in the afternoon, knowing she planned to see her husband last night, and determined to prevent her from doing so—it's possible that Granger could have gone to the hotel and asked for Carrol, and that he got hold of a duplicate key to Room 216 somehow, or had one made. But nothing in all this explains why Mrs. Carrol was given the key to *my* room. And we still don't know who impersonated me on the job."

"We can still check Margrave," said Gentry doubtfully. "They're bringing him in. We've got the ticket-seller and the hostess from the four-twenty flight coming in to see if they can identify the man who called himself Michael Shayne. You willing to stand in a line-up with Margrave, Mike?"

"Of course." Shayne nodded abstractedly, deep in thought. "You've also got an ejected .45 shell from my car to check with this gun of Granger's."

Attorney Bates had sat tight-lipped and quietly consoling his client's widow. Now he rose from the bed and said firmly, "If you're through questioning Mrs. Carrol, may I take her down and transfer her to another room? Unless you prefer to return to Wilmington immediately," he added gently to Nora.

"Mrs. Carrol," Chief Gentry broke in bluntly, "had better stick around awhile. We've quite a bit of checking to do yet, and there may be further questions. But put her in another room, by all means."

Bates took Nora's arm, assisted her from the bed, and escorted her from the room.

Chief Gentry called in the Homicide squad, then said to Shayne, "That's all for us here, Mike. Margrave is probably at Headquarters by this time."

On their way to the elevator, Gentry asked with interest, "How does it look to you now, Mike? Anything smell about this set-up?"

"No," said Shayne honestly. "Everything Mrs. Carrol said checks with what little I heard outside the door. Of course, we've only her word for any of it, but if everything else checks out I don't see how we can disprove it.

"But there's still a guy around Miami who's been taking my name in vain," he went on angrily, "who gave her the wrong key and the wrong number last night. He's the man I want to get my hands on right now."

Gentry was quiet in the elevator. "Coming along?" he asked when they reached the sidewalk.

"In a few minutes," Shayne hedged, going to his own car. "I want to find out just one thing more from Ann Margrave. I only hope she's still sober enough to tell me."

Chapter Thirteen

The waiter in the small bar off Collins Avenue recognized Shayne with a broad grin when he entered. He led Shayne to the rear where Ann Margrave still sat at the same table where they had talked earlier. She was leaning forward with her left elbow on the table, her chin cupped in her palm, the remains of a highball close to her right hand.

"Still working on the money I left you?" he asked the waiter.

"Yes, sir." He glanced at his tab. "She's only had ten since you left."

"In that case," said Shayne gravely, "by all means bring her another. And a double cognac for me."

"Yes, sir." He smiled amiably and went away.

Shayne put his fingertips on Ann's shoulder and said, "Hi."

She lifted her head slowly and looked up at him with disinterest. Her eyes had a glazed expression, but she enunciated perfectly when she answered, "Hi yourself. And who the hell are you?"

"Your favorite detective. Remember?" He moved around and slid into the seat opposite her. "The one who pays for all your drinks," he added.

"Oh, that one." She tilted her glass and squinted at the contents. "Then why the hell don't you?"

"What?"

"Pay for a drink."

"Coming right up," Shayne said cheerfully as the waiter arrived with reinforcements.

The girl was quite drunk, he realized, and in her dazed, half-hypnotic state, the truth might well come through if he took it very gently and did nothing to shock or frighten her. He lit a cigarette and waited until she had a few sips from the fresh high-

ball before asking casually, "Were you this tight last night?"

"Much, much tighter. I was floating."

"Where were you floating?" he asked with a crooked grin.

"Round and about." She gestured vaguely. "Here and there. Hither and yon."

"Was your father sore when you floated into the hotel suite?"

"Didn't see him." She giggled. "Took off my shoes in the hall and floated right into bed."

Shayne frowned fleetingly, tben asked, "How long after Nora married Ralph did you get the cute idea of writing him anonymous letters about her?"

"Took me a long time to think of it." She took a sip of her drink, then continued: "Gave up at first and thought I'd just let her have the poor jerk. But after she made him quit his job and he got so unhappy and all, I said to myself, 'damn it, Ann, where're your guts?' So I did it. Christmas present," she giggled. "First one was Christmas present."

"You sent the first one on Christmas?"

"Umm." Her glazed eyes suddenly beamed with delight.

"Do you happen to know," Shayne asked carefully, "exactly how far they went in the matter of hiring a detective to check up on who wrote the letters?"

"Don't know. Pops knew I wrote them, of course, and he gave me hell. Made me promise to stop." She lifted her highball glass with both hands and drank deeply. Then she slowly fell forward and dropped her head on her arm, spilling the remainder of the drink on the table.

Shayne's gaze was bleak as it rested on her blue-black hair. Her eyes were closed and she breathed evenly. He tossed off his drink and called the waiter.

"Call a taxi to take Miss Margrave to the Roney Plaza," he said, and laid a five-dollar bill on the table. "Give the driver whatever part of this you tbink he deserves, but you see that she gets to the hotel."

"Yes sir," the waiter replied. "I'll take care of it right away."

Shayne's steps were long and rapid as he hurried out to his car to drive back to Miami. He was moving now. He had something. Not much, but it was definitely something. With one answer from Bates, the correct answer, he would really be ready to move.

Will Gentry had Margrave in bis office when Shayne burried in. The manufacturer looked harried and angry. Margrave leaped to his feet when the redhead entered, and leveled a forefinger at him. "What sort of games do you think you're playing?" he snorted. "Chief Gentry says it was your idea to drag me in for interrogation, and be forced into a police line-up like a criminal. Damn it to hell, I retained you to protect my interests. You're fired, do you understand?"

Shayne ignored the pointed finger and Margrave's angry outburst. He turned to Gentry and asked with interest, "Anything doing?"

Gentry shook his graying head wearily. "I'm afraid it's a bust. None of the airport employees identified him."

"I'm not surprised, Will," Shayne broke in impatiently. "Where's Bates?"

"In the next room, frothing," Gentry rumbled.

But Shayne was halfway across the room, headed for another door. Attorney Bates was seated at a desk in the smaller office, talking into a telephone in his dry, precise voice.

Reacbing him in two strides, Shayne put his big hand over the mouthpiece and said curtly, "I need just one answer from you. Did you write me a letter soon after Christmas about investigating the anonymous letters Ann Margrave wrote to Carrol?"

"What's this?" sputtered Bates. "Can't you see I'm on the telephone?"

"You're off it now." He took his hand from the mouthpiece and pressed his finger on the prongs to break the connection. "*Did* you go so far as to write to me at that time?"

"I think I did," the outraged lawyer snapped. "Later, when Mr. Margrave informed me that his daughter was responsible, we dropped the matter, of course."

Shayne drew in a deep breath and relaxed. "How did you get my address for that first letter?"

"I believe I addressed it simply to Miami, Florida. I assumed you were well-enough known to receive it."

"And I replied to that letter early in January?" Shayne persisted.

"You did."

"When this thing about finding Ralph Carrol came up later, you again wrote to me, but this time used the address on my letterhead?"

"Why, yes, I did."

Shayne wbirled and re-entered Gentry's office but did not slacken his long strides as he passed through. "Let Margrave go, Will," he flung over his shoulder. "I'm on my way to get a guy the airport people *will* identify as Mike Shayne."

Chapter Fourteen

Lucy Hamilton was pushing aside a luncheon tray when Shayne entered the office. She said in a worried voice, "There hasn't been a thing, Michael!" Then noting the expression on his face she stopped abruptly. "What is it? You look like the cat that ate a cageful of canaries."

Shayne grinned happily. "I'm beginning to feel like one. Take a look back in the records, angel," he went on swiftly. "Bill Nash—the punk I hired to hold down the office while you were on vacation the first of the year. I want his address."

Lucy frowned and turned to a filing-cabinet beside her desk. "Why do you want him? You fired him before I got back because you caught him snitching petty cash."

"He was a lazy, no-good s.o.b.," Shayne agreed cheerfully. "But I want him now."

Lucy drew out a card and read aloud, "William C. Nash. The Dillmore Hotel."

Shayne lowered one hip to the railing in front of the desk. "Get me the Dillmore, angel."

She consulted the directory and dialed a number. When someone answered, she said, "Just a moment, please," and handed the receiver to Shayne.

"Mr. Nash, William Nash."

A girl's voice said, "I'm sorry. We have no Mr. Nash at the present."

"Do you have a Michael Shayne registered?"

"No, sir. I'm sorry."

"Look, honey," said Shayne persuasively. "This is very important. Bill Nash was living there a couple of months ago, the first two weeks in January, for sure. Will you check and see when he left and what forwarding address you have?"

"It'll take a few minutes. Do you wish me to call you back?"

Shayne said, "I'll hold on." He put his hand over the mouthpiece and explained to Lucy, "You heard enough back and forth this morning to realize that a lawyer in Wilmington claims he hired me to locate Ralph Carrol in Miami a couple of weeks ago. He didn't, but he swears he had letters and phone calls from me. I just learned that he first wrote me early in January—that's while you were on vacation and Nash was in the office. So that has to be it. Nash evidently decided to turn detective himself, and kept the letter from me. Had some Michael Shayne letterheads of his own printed, and replied to Bates on one of them. God knows how many other cases he may have picked up!"

The girl's voice was on the wire again. He said, "Yes?"

"Mr. Nash checked out on January fifteenth. He didn't leave a forwarding address, but we hold his mail and he drops in to pick it up occasionally."

Shayne said, "Is there any mail there for him now?"

"Yes. Two letters that came several days ago."

"Thanks. You're a sweetheart and I'll buy you a drink next time I'm around." He bent forward to cradle the receiver, his eyes alert and narrowed. "No address," he told Lucy. "Comes in for his mail every few days." He tugged at his earlobe for a moment, muttering, "Bill's biggest trouble was the bangtails," then asked briskly, "Where is the Dillmore Hotel?"

Lucy looked at the open directory and gave him a number in the 700 block on N.E. Second Avenue.

Shayne made a mental note of the number, and after a brief and thoughtful silence he took a small address-book from his pocket, read a telephone number to Lucy, asked her to dial it, and reached for the receiver.

A man's voice answered, and Shayne said, "Len? Mike Shayne. How they running these days?" He grinned as he listened, then: "That's good. Look, Len, do me a favor? Where would I go on the 700 block on Northeast Second Avenue, to lay two bucks on a filly's nose?"

The redhead gave Lucy Hamilton a left-eyed wink as the voice came over the wire. He said, "Maybe you haven't got it in your head, Len, but check, will you? It's important. Sure, I'll hang on."

Shayne waited for several minutes, then said happily, "That's just what I wanted. I'll do you a favor some day."

He tossed the instrument to Lucy and went out fast. Ten minutes later he pulled in to the curb in front of a dingy bar and grill half a block from the Dillmore Hotel.

Half a dozen loungers were clustered at the end of the bar near the television set. The baldheaded bartender languidly chewed on a frayed matchstick and drew two steins of beer.

Shayne slid onto the front stool and waited until the bartender drifted toward him. "A slug with beer chaser," he said, and lit a cigarette. When his order was placed before him he asked casually, "Seen Bill Nash around lately?"

"Not much. He moved, you know. Drops in sometimes. I don't know you, do I?"

"No. But you're Joe, huh?"

"That's right."

"Bill's moved, and I can't locate him. I remember he told me once that you handled all his bets, and I figured maybe he still laid a few with you."

Joe chuckled. "He phones one every day. Regular as clockwork."

"Know where he hangs out?"

"Can't say as I do."

"But you do have a phone number where you can reach him," suggested Shayne with a grin. "Just in case a broomtail should happen to drop in and whinny a hot tip you could pass on."

"I might—and I mightn't. You a friend of his?"

"We're old pals. I've got a deal I could use him on if I knew how to get in touch."

"That so?" Joe asked without much interest, and started to move down the bar.

Shayne had a bill in his hand before the bartender moved too far. He folded it to show the $10 denomination and said, "Bill's phone number is worth this to me."

Joe moved back warily, eyeing the bill. "Must be a big deal."

Shayne shrugged. "You'll be doing us both a favor," he urged.

The bartender propped both elbows on the damp bar directly in front of Shayne and said in a sneering tone, "If you're such a good friend of Bill Nash's, why don't you save yourself money by taking a look down at the end of the bar?"

Shayne looked at the bartender with surprise and suspicion, then narrowed his eyes at the group watching at television. "What the hell you giving me?" he said angrily. "None of those men even halfway look like Bill."

The folded $10 bill was expertly plucked from his fingers, and Joe said pleasantly, "Just wanted to make sure you're a pal of his. Bring you that number in a minute." He moved to the center of the bar and consulted a book stashed under the counter. He returned and gave the redhead a number which Shayne wrote down in his little black book, then shoved a half-dollar across the bar and said, "I'll tell Bill I saw you." He went out without touching the drink he had paid for.

At the first public telephone down the street he dialed a number and said, "Mike Shayne. Give me an address that fits this telephone number." He had the information in less than a minute—an address on North Miami Avenue in the Forties.

Some twenty minutes later he was standing before a door opening from the street onto a stairway leading up to an apartment above a cigar store. He went up and tried the door at the top. It opened into a shabby sitting-room with shades drawn against the sunlight. He crossed to an open door on the right and looked into a small bedroom.

Bill Nash lay on his back; his mouth was laxly open. With every breath he emitted a snorting snore. Shayne stood on the threshold regarding the man with distaste. "Little man has had a busy night," he muttered under his breath.

Turning back to the living-room he let up one of the shades, opened the window, crossed to a table against one wall with a portable typewriter on top, and opened the center drawer. There was stationery inside; he drew out one sheet and read the letterhead neatly printed:

MICHAEL SHAYNE
PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS

It carried Nash's North Miami Avenue address and telephone number. He took the sheet with him into the bedroom. He shook Bill Nash violently.

His former employee sat up with a surprised grunt. His jaw gaped when he saw the redhead leaning over him. Shayne slapped him hard with his open hand before he could speak.

Nash fell sideways on the bed and cowered there, holding his hands up to ward off another blow. "Don't, Mr. Shayne. Don't hit me again! I swear I'm sorry, but I didn't mean any harm."

"Shut up," Shayne growled, towering over him and holding out the forged letterhead. "Where's the correspondence with Bates about the Carrol case that you stole from Wilmington this morning?"

"I burned it all up." Nash cringed and clawed at the flimsy sheet as if to pull it over him for protection. "Soon as I heard on the radio that Carrol was dead, I knew it was a bad mess. But I never meant any harm. It just seemed like a smart angle when I started it. You were turning down cases like that all the time and I didn't see why I couldn't get in on some of them."

"How many other cases did you take on in my name?" Shayne demanded, his right palm poised above Nash's face.

"Only three or four," Nash vowed in a whining tone. "All stuff I knew you'd turn down—divorces and like that. I was ready to quit and you'd never have known the difference; then I got that second letter from Bates." He paused to moisten his thin dry lips, and added, "So I thought I might's well do one more."

"Why did you give Mrs. Carrol the wrong key last night?" grated Shayne.

"The wrong key?" His teeth chattered nervously, and he gulped. "I

At twenty, a man thinks he can save the world; at thirty he begins to wish he could save part of his own salary.

didn't! What you mean? I gave her the key to her husband's apartment so's she could slip in and get him caught with her to stop the divorce."

Shayne let the letterhead flutter to the bed as he caught the man's scrawny shoulders and pulled him up from the bed. Holding Nash aloft with his left hand, he clenched his right fist and drew it back.

"So help me God," he warned, "I'm going to coldcock you if you don't tell the truth. Did you think it was funny to send her to my room instead of her husband's? Or did somebody pay you to do it that way, after arranging to spot him in my hotel?"

"I don't know what you mean," Nash swore, writhing and twisting in the redhead's grip in an effort to get his feet on the floor. "I had the lawyer get him in there because they knew I worked for you and wouldn't think anything if I asked for a key."

Shayne struck him in the face with precise and carefully calculated force. Blood spurted from Nash's flattened nose and a deep gash opened in his upper lip. He cried out in agony, choked, and spit out two front teeth in a mouthful of bloody froth.

The redhead lowered him until his feet touched the floor, but held him inexorably with his left hand. "That's just a sample," he said with frightening calm. "I'll knock every one of your teeth down your throat if you don't start talking." He shook Nash like a rag doll. "Who paid you to switch keys on Mrs. Carrol?"

Nash's eyes bulged with fear. His body went limp in Shayne's grasp. He drooled and sputtered as he vehemently denied knowledge of what Shayne was talking about.

Giving up in disgust, the redhead tossed him across the bed where he lay in a heap. "Get into some clothes," he ordered, stalking into the other room. He found a bottle half-full of whisky, took a long drink out of it, then went back to the bedroom. Nash was trying to stanch the nosebleed with the top of his pajamas.

"You can let it bleed," Shayne told Nash flatly, "or you can get into the bathroom and put cold water on it. I'll give you five minutes. Then we're going to Headquarters whether you have any clothes on or not."

Back in the living-room he took several sheets of the forged letterheads and stuffed them into his pocket. He returned to the bedroom to find Nash wearing a blood-spotted shirt and trousers, and groping on the floor for his socks.

"You're all right the way you are," Shayne growled, as he took Nash firmly by the elbow and jerked him erect. He swung the arm up in a half-Nelson behind Nash's back and shoved him out to the stairway and down to his car at the curb.

Nash huddled in the corner of the front seat, sniffling and choking, his face pressed into a handkerchief, while Shayne drove to Headquarters. Parking in the police lot, he yanked Nash out and half-carried him in by the side entrance and back to Gentry's office.

Timothy Rourke was with the chief when Shayne kicked the door open and tossed him inside. "There he is, Will. I hope I left him enough teeth to talk with."

Gentry stared at the bloody, barefoot man. "Who the hell is it?" he thundered.

Timothy Rourke's slaty eyes burned in their deep sockets. "'*What* the hell is it' would be more appropriate," he said mockingly, and his nostrils flared like a bloodhound on the scent.

"The name is Bill Nash," Shayne grated. "I had him in my office pinch-hitting for Lucy a couple of months ago. He got smart and tried to grab up all the new cases that came in while I wasn't around. Bates' letter was one of them.

"I got everything from him," he went on grimly, "except the straight about mixing up my room with Carrol's. Maybe your boys' technique will be better than mine for that."

Pulling the forged letterheads from his pocket he tossed part of them on Gentry's desk and started out.

Rourke sprang up and caught his arm. "Look, Mike, give me the dope. What's new?"

Shayne stopped in his tracks. "Take a look at the forged letterheads I gave Gentry, Tim," he said thoughtfully. "This is a good chance to clear up the thing on Lucy in the *Herald* extra. Say she was there in the line of duty, helping me to solve a murder."

"You mean—"

"I mean that Lucy was trying to get hold of a letter written on one of those letterheads when she broke into Mrs. Carrol's room."

Rourke beamed. "A good follow-up after Granger's confession and suicide! Will do. And don't forget I've got a private date with Lucy."

"Lucy knows your preference for blondes," Shayne told him with a crooked grin, "so watch your step."

Chapter Fifteen

Michael Shayne was comfortably relaxed in a deep chair beside the battered oak desk in his apartment. He was expecting a telephone call, and with cognac and icewater at hand, there had been pleasurable anticipation in the two hours of waiting. He had no doubt whatever that the call would come through sooner or later, and was perfectly content to wait.

It was nine o'clock when the phone rang. He lifted the receiver before it could ring a second time and said:

"Hello, Nora."

A little gasp came over the wire at his greeting. Then with diffidence and curiosity she asked, "How on earth did you know it was I?"

"I've been expecting your call. We have unfinished business, you know, you and I?"

She said, "Yes," very quickly and eagerly, then paused for a long moment before continuing rapidly, "Mr. Bates has been telling me everything—about the man who pretended be was you and all. And I realize I owe you an apology for even suspecting last night that you had intentionally given me the wrong key and room number to—you know—to get me to come there and—" Her voice trailed off.

"Looking back on it now," said Shayne pleasantly, "it wasn't such a bad idea."

Again there was a pause, a brief one. "That is sort of what I've been thinking, too," she said with a new warmth in her voice, and added, "Looking back on it."

"Good. If you're sticking around Miami for a while, why don't we try it again some night?"

"That—is what I wanted to talk about. I'm going back tonight. Mr. Bates and I have reservations on the midnight plane. I'm all packed, and if you're not doing anything special, I thought I might stop in to apologize in person."

"I'm not doing anything special," he assured her in a mellow tone, "except getting up right now to mix us a drink. Sidecars suit you?"

"Oh, yes. A sidecar will be wonderful."

"You know your way and the room number," he reminded her. "Don't be too long."

"I won't. Right away." Her voice held a sensuous lilt.

Shayne hung up, shaking his red head slowly. Women! he marveled. Talk about resiliency! Here was a dame whose estranged husband and current lover had both died violent deaths practically in her arms, within the space of twelve hours, making a fast date with a new man whom she had encountered by accident!

Picking up the two glasses in one hand and the cognac bottle in the other, he carried them to the kitchenette where he squeezed a cupful of lemon juice and poured it into a cocktail shaker. He then added an equal amount of Cointreau and two cups of cognac, filled the shaker almost to the top with ice cubes,

screwed the lid on and went back to the living room, shaking it lazily.

He set the shaker on the desk, got two champagne glasses to place beside it, frowned at the arrangement of chairs and moved his own a little. He then pushed another comfortable chair around handy to the shaker and placed it so that Nora Carrol's knees would almost touch his when they were seated. He turned on a floor lamp with indirect lighting, switched off the bright desk lamp, and was giving the sidecars a few extra shakes when he heard quick footsteps coming up the hall. They stopped outside his door, and there was a light rap.

Placing the shaker on the desk, he went to the door and opened it.

Nora Carrol was bareheaded and wore a simple blue traveling suit that revealed her curves. Her dark eyes met his steadily and her lips parted in a diffident smile.

Shayne knew he could kiss her if he wished. This fleeting moment was the one in which the tone of their meeting would be established.

He put out one hand and touched her lightly between the shoulder-blades, and the faint pressure brought her a step forward into the curve of his arm. She didn't close her eyes or try to move her head when he kissed her. Her lips were cool and only slightly parted, but she made no attempt to withdraw them from the insistent and increasing pressure of his.

Her body was against him, not pressing immodestly, but pulsating and eager, and as they stood like that she lifted her right hand and trailed fingertips across his cheek.

He released her then, and she stepped away at once from the circle of his arm, lowering her lashes and saying with sharply indrawn breath, "I didn't mean that. I don't know what you'll think of me."

Shayne grinned and closed the door. "Exactly what I was thinking before you came," he assured her. "That you're pretty damned terrific." He took her arm and led her to the chair facing his, unscrewing the cap from the frosted shaker and poured the champagne glasses full. He handed one to her and held the other high. "Here's to the wrong key," he said buoyantly; "may you use it often."

Her color deepened slightly, but she drank to the toast. Shayne emptied his glass and sat down.

Nora glanced around the room, then studied her drink for a moment before saying, "That's what I came to talk about," in a low voice. "I keep thinking about last night, about getting undressed here and—"

"I keep thinking about that, too," Shayne told her helpfully. "It's due to be one of my pleasantest memories."

She lifted her glass, drained it, and held it out to him. "May I have another, please? I need several of these to make me stop feeling like a shameless wanton."



"$5,000! Why, that's robbery!"

Shayne filled both glasses. "Have all you want, of course, but don't stop feeling that way on my account. Men like nothing better than shameless wantons, if you don't already know it."

She took the glass and smiled fleetingly, drank half its contents, and accepted a cigarette and light from him. She settled back and said soberly, "I think I'd say it differently. That men like women who act like shameless wantons when they're not."

"You should know better than I," he told her agreeably. "I was told today that one night with Nora has been known to change strong men into infatuated weaklings."

"Who told you that?" she demanded.

"Don't jump at me," he said with a slight shrug. "I consider it one of the greatest compliments I ever heard. In fact, I wouldn't mind—"

"*Who* said that about me?" she insisted, sitting rigidly erect.

"Ann Margrave."

"Oh, her!" She made a gesture of dismissal. "Ann is the perpetual adolescent. She chased after Ralph for years without getting anywhere, and she never did forgive me for marrying him."

Mike Shayne took a long drink. "So you are going back to Wilmington tonight. Do you have to?"

"Yes. I— Mr. Bates made the reservation. Of course, I have to go." She smiled and added, "Which doesn't leave us much time for those drinks."

Shayne filled her glass the third time. "Trouble with cocktails is they get weak and watery when the ice melts. You don't have to *stay* in Wilmington, do you?"

"Not forever, I hope." She smiled quite gayly and sipped at her cocktail. "I wouldn't call this really weak yet. A little more and I'll be tight enough to tell you what I really came to say."

"Have a little more by all means," he invited with a wide grin. "If you should happen to miss that plane—"

"No," she said quickly. "I really mustn't do that. That's why—well—" She fluttered her eyelids and took a deep drink, as though seeking courage to go on.

Shayne didn't help her. He crushed out his cigarette, sipped, and waited.

"That's the reason why I wanted to tell you I hope to come back to Miami in a few weeks," she said breathlessly. "For a long vacation."

"I hoped you were going to say that, Nora."

"Did you? Did you really?"

Shayne nodded. "We don't have to pretend to each other, do we?"

"No. I guess we don't, Michael." Her voice was beginning to slur a trifle, caressing and sensuous. "So you won't be shocked if I confess that

I've been thinking if I had the key to your room when I do come back—and—well, if you didn't know I was even here and then some night when you were sound asleep, like last night, it would be something to anticipate—to look forward to—"

"It would, indeed," he said. "And I'm certainly not shocked, darling." He half stood, reached across the desk to open the center drawer, took out the key she had left behind early that same morning and held it up. "You really want to take this with you?"

"Oh, yes," she exclaimed breathlessly. "I really do." She reached for it eagerly.

Shayne drew it back, looking down at it broodingly. "I wondered," he said flatly, "how long it would take you to realize your pretty neck was in danger as long as I have this key."

"What do you mean?"

"I imagine you realized the danger in the beginning," mused Shayne. "While Chief Gentry was here this morning. But you couldn't very well ask for it then. It was some sort of evidence. You showed remarkable restraint by walking out and leaving it here as if it meant nothing to you."

"What do you *mean?*" she demanded again, her voice rising shrilly on the last word.

"YOU'VE been pretty damned remarkable through this whole thing," Shayne went on flatly. "What actually happened in your hotel-room during the minute and a half you waited for me to reach your door? Did Ted Granger really shoot himself? Or did you grab the gun away from him when I knocked, and kill him, too?"

"I don't know what you mean, Michael," she moaned, stretching out her hands to him and moving forward until her knees touched his. "Tell me you're joking."

"This key isn't any joke," he told her harshly. "It's going to unlock the death chamber for you, and you know it. I'm afraid we can't touch you for shooting Ted Granger. You're the only one who can testify as to what happened in that locked room. But you'll never talk yourself out of murdering your husband, Nora. It just isn't in the books."

"I have no idea what you're talking about," she told him calmly. "No matter what absurd theory you have about Ralph's death, I couldn't possibly have got into his room to do it, if I tried. You know yourself that's the wrong key."

Shayne said, "You made one slip, Nora,"—dispassionately. "One tiny slip in some of the neatest and fastest work to beat a murder rap I've ever run into. Why did you close my door on the night-latch last night before coming to bed with me?"

"Because I thought you were Ralph and didn't want anyone else coming in while I was here. I'd just left the door open to have a little light to see to undress. You can't be serious," she pleaded. "You're just joking, and I don't think it's funny at all."

"If I hadn't been standing in the bedroom doorway, if I hadn't seen you go to close the door, it might never have come to me. But I couldn't get that picture of you out of my mind," he went on angrily. "And finally I realized the truth. You knew perfectly well you weren't in Ralph's apartment. Your whole story was a desperate lie to alibi yourself."

"I don't understand what you're trying to get at at all," she told him, her voice still calm, but cold.

"Ludlow," said Shayne grimly, "—the photographer who was supposed to take a picture of you in bed with Ralph as clinching evidence to kill the divorce. We got it from Ludlow, and from Bill Nash who was posing as Michael Shayne in the deal. You knew the set-up. Everything was timed to the minute. They'll testify you were to enter Ralph's apartment at exactly two-ten. You were to leave the door ajar for Ludlow to follow ten minutes later, get undressed and into Ralph's bed to have your picture shot.

"And you did just that, Nora. The door was open for Ludlow at two-twenty. Ralph was there waiting for his picture—but you weren't."

"Where was I, Master-Mind?" she asked scathingly.

"You were in Ralph's kitchen, going out his back door onto the fire escape, with his door key which is just a common one that opens most ordinary doors. I tried my back-door key on his this afternoon and it fits, all right. You worked fast to get out of a hell of a spot after you stabbed him. You knew the photographer was due in that open doorway any moment. I imagine you ducked into the kitchen with your clothes in your arms about the time Ludlow walked in. Or did Ralph wake up before you were fully undressed, and threaten to throw you out—and you got so angry you grabbed up the paper-knife and let him have it before you realized you were trapped there?"

"You're telling it," she said, feigning indifference, but her voice was unsteady.

"That's right, I am," he agreed pleasantly. "Anyhow, you did come out on the fire escape, bringing the back-door key to 216 with you. You came one flight to my landing. By that time, you'd had a moment to think. Ralph was dead, and the detective and photographer would place you in his room at the right time. If you could get into the apartment below, pretend you believed it was Ralph's and had been given the wrong key by mistake— Well, it was a crazy chance, but the only one you saw. And you took it, babe. With the aplomb of a seasoned murderess, may I say? I don't know how much practice you'd had, but—"

"You actually sound serious," Nora broke in, bewildered and beginning to be frightened. "How can you possibly believe all that nonsense? I had no way to get into Ralph's room. That key doesn't fit his door. You and the chief tried it last night."

"No," said Shayne grimly. "That was a big break for you. The merest chance, but it almost put you in the clear. The police had jammed the lock on Ralph's door when they broke in, and we brought his key down here to try it on my door. It didn't fit, of course. But we *didn't* try this key on my door. You said you had come in by the front door and we assumed you had, and it didn't occur to us to test it.

"But after it was all over and you had Ted Granger conveniently dead and framed for the job, you realized that I still had the key. One of these days, you thought, Shayne will try to open his door with that key—*and it won't open.*

"And you knew that that would be the pay-off. I'd immediately know your entire story had been a lie. But if you could get hold of the key, and get rid of it before I tried it on my door, you'd be clear. And you tried, honey," he went on, his voice suddenly sympathetic. "Heaven knows you tried. That's why I expected your call tonight. I *knew* you'd call."

Nora Carrol had been leaning back listlessly as he spoke, nervously toying with the suède purse in her lap. Her hand dived inside as he ended, and came out with a tiny .25 automatic. She sat up with teeth bared and her finger tight on the trigger.

"All right, you smart bastard," she grated. "Once that key is gone you'll never prove a thing. Give it to me."

SHAYNE shrugged and tossed it into her lap. "You can have it. I didn't mention that you forgot something else. Your fingerprints are on Ralph's rear-door knob, and on mine. If you had wiped those off—"

"I did wipe them off! You're lying!"

Shayne jerked his right foot under the edge of her chair just as she realized what she had said.

The small bullet went over his head into the ceiling, and he had her in his arms with one hand clamped over the gun while his other hand reached for the telephone to call the police to take her away. •



MOVIES



Drama: ***Above and Beyond*** (MGM) is strong and compelling human drama about the principals involved in the Hiroshima atom-bombing, excellently enacted by Robert Taylor as Colonel Tibbets, the pilot given the dreary job of whipping together an anonymous air force, the members of which must be kept in the dark about the job ahead. In a performance which at least equals his best, Taylor returns from two years overseas and is given a brief 30 minutes with his wife and a son he has never seen, before the months of testing begin. In this setting of tension, the picture details the various stages of progress made toward the day the bomb will be used, and ends of course with the thrilling climax of the actual bomb-dropping.

Melodrama: ***The Black Castle*** (Universal) is a straight horror story of the old school with none of the ingredients missing: the lonely, storm-swept castle isolated on the vast, forbidding estate of a cruel count; the unwilling bride; the dashing, handsome hero; the torture chamber; hulking bodyguards and an alligator-filled pit. It all begins when two friends of Richard Greene fail to return from a hunting trip to cruel Count Stephen McNally's estate, and Greene wangles an invitation to solve the mystery. He is soon able to prove that McNally murdered the friends, and is out to get him. Cat-and-mouse builds up the suspense, and when Greene tries to flee the castle, taking with him Paula Corday, the count's unwilling bride, McNally and his giant but dumb bodyguard, Lon Chaney, capture them and plot to bury them alive. There is more—equally improbable, but made believable by excellent photography and good acting—and of course hero Greene finally kills villain McNally and escapes with the heroine.

BOOKS



Sea Adventure: ***The Wreck of the Running Gale*** (Doubleday, $3.50) by Garland Roark. A great story-teller at his best, Roark is known for other such exciting tales as *Wake of the Red Witch* and *Fair Wind to Java.* In this one, the *Running Gale,* crack sailing-vessel of Barrows & Co., was stolen from under the hawklike nose of ruthless Captain Raikes, with a $100,000 cargo. Owen Ibsen, junior partner of Barrows, signed a motley crew and with the aid of an adventurer named Bradley started on a heated chase after the vanished *Running Gale,* in the wake of the vengeful Captain Raikes, who had already sailed in furious pursuit. Far in the South Seas, on a remote pagan island ruled by an obsessed Frenchman, these strong men clash in a bitter and violent climax.

Historical: ***The Proud Retreat*** (Doubleday, $3.00) by Clifford Dowdey. A historical novel of an extraordinary event, this is the story of Jefferson Davis' escape after the fall of Richmond and the perilous flight of a small group guarding the entire Confederate treasury, the hard core of what was left of the Southern nation zigzagging through the South, caught between Sherman's Army and local marauders drawn like vultures to loot the treasury.

TELEVISION



Thriller: We don't usually review TV shows until they are actually on the air because too much can happen between planning and production, but ***Mystery at Midnight*** shows so much promise we're willing to go out on a limb and predict that if present plans go through (and they probably will, since air-time has been bought), this will be a strong and unusual show with two 15-minute psychological thrillers loosely tied together by a narrator. These will concentrate on people, rather than on violence merely for the sake of violence, as on so many current shows, and should be full of powerful innovations in camera technique and TV presentation.

Inspiration: If your criterion of a good show is that you can scarcely believe it is over already, then ***Life Is Worth Living*** will be near the top of your list. The program opens with a picture of a big office. A tall thin man in a strikingly dramatic costume walks on and for half an hour he talks as a professor might to his class. That's about all there is to Life Is Worth Living, but it is one of the most exciting shows on TV. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen makes it that way, and not just for Catholics. There is warmth and kindness and gentle humor to suit everyone.

RECORDS



Bands: Evidently RCA Victor became bored with all the so-called new sounds and tortured vocalists and decided it was time to resurrect good dance music—music with taste and imagination rather than gimmicks. The result is the ***Sauter-Finnegan*** orchestra, as exciting a group as we've heard in years. Both men are top-flight arrangers and the combination of their considerable talents has produced music that is easy to listen to, ideal for dancing, and of real interest to the serious record collector.

NOTE: All records reviewed are available on all three speeds.

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

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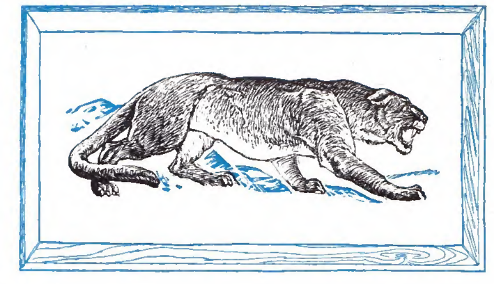
FEBRUARY

YOU CAN HUNT ANY TIME!



If you're one of those sportsmen who uses his guns only once a year, during the regular season, you won't want to miss BLUEBOOK's big guide to year-round hunting. A real scoop for the outdoor man. *See page 24!*





BIG Mid-winter Fiction Round-up!

Complete new Michael Shayne mystery novel: **THE NAKED FRAME,** *by Brett Halliday*—**A DAY IN THE SUN,** *by John D. MacDonald*—**FANCY FRANKIE,** *by Van MacNair, Jr.*—**THE SWINDLE,** *by Wilbur S. Peacock*—**BONE OF CONTENTION,** *by Joe Coogan*—**TWO,** *by Evan Hunter*—**THE HOSTAGES,** *by Jon Cleary*—**PRIDE OF CLOTH,** *by John Rhodes Sturdy*—**THE SET-UP,** *by William Holder*—**DESERT WAIF,** *by Elsie Lee.*